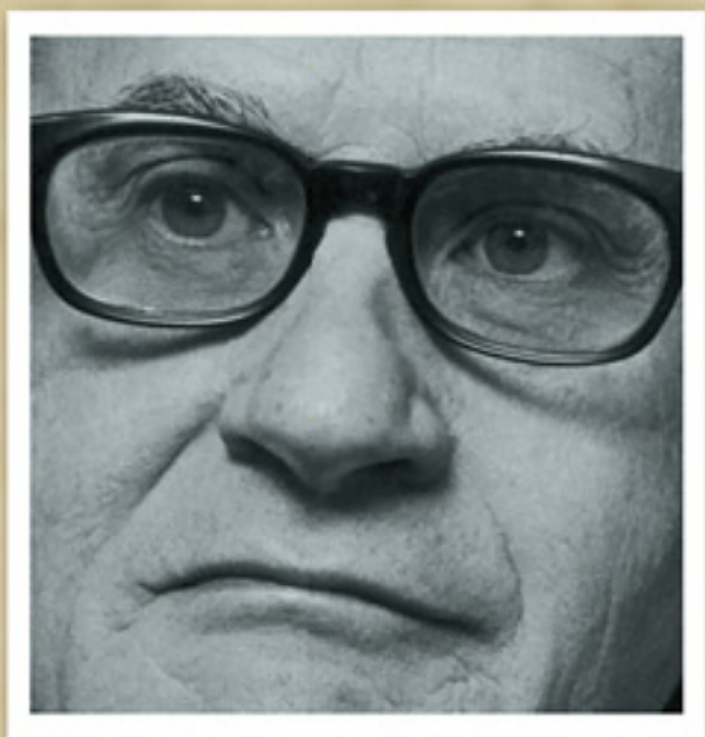


FRANZ ROSENTHAL



# Knowledge Triumphant

*The concept of knowledge in medieval Islam*

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY DIMITRI GUTAS

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Knowledge Triumphant

# Brill Classics in Islam

VOLUME 2

# Knowledge Triumphant

The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam

*By*

Franz Rosenthal

with an introduction by Dimitri Gutas



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*AL-ILMU shay'un lâ yu'fikâ ba'dahû hattâ tu'tiyahû kullaka fâ-idhâ a'taytahû  
kullaka fâ-anta min i'tâ'ihî laka l-ba'da 'alâ khaṭarin*

“KNOWLEDGE is something that will not give part of itself to you until you give your all to it, and when you give your all to it, then you stand a chance but you cannot be sure that it will give you that part” (an-Nazzâm as quoted by al-Jâhiz)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, VI, 97 (Cairo 1349/1931). Further, Abū Aḥmad al-ʿAskarī, *Taḥḥīf*, 2 (Cairo 1383/1963); Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, *al-Haṭṭh 'alâ ṭalab al-ʿilm*, beg., in the Istanbul mss. Aṣīr Ef. 433, fol. 32a, and Hamidiye 1464, fol. 51a; ar-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥādḍarāt*, I, 28 (Būlāq 1287), in the name of al-Khalīl; al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā'*, I, 44 (Cairo 1352/1933); Ibn Jamā'ah, *Tadhkirat as-sāmi' wa-l-mutakallim fī adab al-ʿālim wa-l-muta'allim*, 71 (Hyderabad 1353); al-ʿAlmawī, *al-Mu'īd fī adab al-muḥḍid wa-l-mustafīd*, 60 (Damascus 1349). Both Ibn Jamā'ah and al-ʿAlmawī quote only the first half, without the name of an authority. Only the originator of the statement would be able to tell us whether we should read *tu'tiyahû* or *tu'īhi*, but at least I hope that I have caught the meaning of the difficult last two of his words.



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## FOREWORD

The present work has been in the making for many years. A first report was presented to the Twenty-Fifth International Congress of Orientalists in Moscow in August 1960 in the form of a brief paper. Its substance was published in the Proceedings of the Congress, II, 62 f. (Moscow 1962–63; Index, Moscow 1964). A preliminary treatment of the definitions of knowledge (Chapter IV) was contributed to a symposium, held at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas, in the spring of 1965, on “The Conflict of Traditionalism and Modernism in the Muslim Middle East.” It was published in a volume of this title edited by C. Leiden, which appeared in 1969 (1966), 117–33.

My great indebtedness to the many libraries which put their manuscript treasures at my disposal will become clear from the citations in the footnotes. A fellowship grant from the American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT) enabled me to spend six weeks in Turkey in the spring of 1967, which were used for research in the libraries of Istanbul, Manisa, Edirne, and Bursa. This helped to round out previous research undertaken abroad, made possible mainly by the generous policy of Yale University with respect to Sabbatical leaves.

Attention may be called here to the Index and the way it has been utilized for simplified reference. Full bibliographical data are indicated in the body of the book at first occurrences only. Thereafter, abridged forms of reference are usually employed, most of which will be clear by themselves. However, the places where the full citations appear can be easily located in the Index under either the name of the author or, in the case of a work whose author is not known or not mentioned, the short title.



## INTRODUCTION

*Dimitri Gutas*

Significant authors may write many and valuable works, but as a rule there is one among them in which there is such harmonious blend of profound and original insight, industry, and their own unique voice that it is exceptional. Franz Rosenthal's *Knowledge Triumphant* easily falls into this category, even when one considers the author's remarkable career and prodigious scholarly output.

Born and educated in Berlin, Franz Rosenthal (1914-2003) studied classics and oriental languages at the university in his home town at a time when German scholarship in the humanities had reached its apogee. His precocity matched the exacting standards of his renowned professors and he received his doctorate in 1935 with a dissertation on Palmyrenian inscriptions, which was soon (1938) followed by his classic history of Aramaic studies, for which he received the Lidzbarski Medal. He left Germany at the end of 1938 and came to the United States in 1940, where he taught first at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and then at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1956 he moved to Yale University where he taught, as Sterling Professor of Arabic and Semitic Studies, until his retirement in 1985.

Franz Rosenthal's scholarly work is extensive and covers most aspects of Arabic and Islamic studies and Semitic studies.<sup>1</sup> He was a consummate philologist in a number of languages, and especially in Arabic and Aramaic,<sup>2</sup> though much as he prized philology, he viewed it as the handmaiden of historical and cultural studies. Trained in an age when oriental studies had not developed narrow specialization in the various disciplines, he used the philological method to study and write about all aspects of Islamic history—intellectual, social, and political. He produced pioneering *and* classic works on such varied subjects as

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<sup>1</sup> A bibliography of Rosenthal's writings was published in the third Variorum collection of his articles, *Science and Medicine in Islam* (Aldershot 1990), ix–xxvii, and, in a more complete form, in *Oriens* 36 (2001) xiii–xxxiv. For more information on some of the details in this Introduction see my biographical memoir in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 149 (2005) 442–446.

<sup>2</sup> On which he wrote the two classic textbooks in use to this very day, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (1961) and *An Aramaic Handbook* (1967).

Graeco-Arabic studies,<sup>3</sup> Islamic history and historiography,<sup>4</sup> the history of Arabic philology,<sup>5</sup> literature and art history,<sup>6</sup> and most importantly, Islamic social history, in a series of publications on a project close to his heart which he called “Man versus society in Islam.”<sup>7</sup> In all this his approach was neither dogmatic nor moralizing but, as he himself put it, “to let the sources speak for themselves and to avoid subjective interpretation.”<sup>8</sup>

This orientalist approach, though perhaps justifiably impugned for its misapplications, in its proper and most productive form, as consummately practiced by Rosenthal, is particularly apt for the study of medieval Islamic civilization. The scholars and thinkers who left us their writings upon which we base our knowledge of that civilization were themselves not narrow specialists but polymaths, experts in various intellectual fields; to grasp the full range of their reach one has to command an equally vast body of knowledges. It is therefore no accident that one of Rosenthal’s masterpieces is his annotated translation of Ibn Ḥaldūn’s *Introduction* (*Muqaddima*), κτῆμα ἐς αἰεὶ and unlikely to be surpassed;<sup>9</sup> fully to understand *that* masterpiece one has to acquire the knowledge of all aspects of Islamic civilization that Ibn Ḥaldūn had.

All these characteristics of Rosenthal’s work come together in the present work, on a subject that is as multifaceted as it is original.

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<sup>3</sup> See his valuable anthology *The Classical Heritage in Islam* (original German version 1965, English translation 1975), and the collection of articles in the second Variorum volume, *Greek Philosophy in the Arab World* (Aldershot 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Equally as significant as his *History of Muslim Historiography* (1952, second edition 1968) are his translations of the first and last volume of Ṭabarī’s *History*, together with the study of Ṭabarī’s life and work in the introduction of the first volume.

<sup>5</sup> Unparalleled to this day remains his *Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship* (1947), which itself ought to be reprinted.

<sup>6</sup> See the articles collected in *Four Essays on Art and Literature in Islam* (1971).

<sup>7</sup> Rosenthal announced the project, with this title, in the first volume in the series, *The Muslim Concept of Freedom* (1960), p. viii. Other studies include *The Herb* (1971) and *Gambling in Islam* (1975), and some of the articles collected in the first Variorum collection, *Muslim Intellectual and Social History* (Aldershot 1990).

<sup>8</sup> Characteristic, though, of both his scholarly integrity and his deep understanding of the contextuality of the author and the complex relationship between him and his subject, is his immediate qualification of this statement, “This, admittedly, is possible only to a limited degree;” foreword to the first Variorum collection mentioned in the preceding note, p. ix.

<sup>9</sup> The latest translator of the *Muqaddima* into French (2002), the Moroccan thinker and historian Abdesselam Cheddadi, pays homage to Rosenthal’s “vaste érudition” in his *Actualité d’Ibn Khaldūn* (Témara, Morocco, 2006, p. 234). The Greek is Thucydides’ description of the purpose for which he wrote his own *History*: as “a possession [to be had] forever.”

“Civilizations tend to revolve around meaningful concepts of an abstract nature which more than anything else give them their distinctive nature,” Rosenthal begins his study, introducing his subject; this concept is, for Islamic civilization, knowledge, *‘ilm*. The audacity of the undertaking is stunning; because, in essence, I regard *Knowledge Triumphant* as Rosenthal’s response to Ibn Ḥaldūn’s *Muqaddima*: the latter aimed at describing and analyzing the motor of world history, or actually, Islamic history; Rosenthal responded by claiming to have identified knowledge as the quickening concept in Islamic civilization and proceeded to study it in great detail, without for a moment lapsing, just like his great predecessor, in meaningless generalizations. It is therefore instructive to observe how he structured the book by taking each relevant subject in succession: Ḡāhiliyya studies with comparative Semitics, Qur’ānic studies, *kalām* and other religious sciences, Ṣūfism, philosophy and Graeco-Arabic studies, culminating in his favorite subject, social history. Each one of these chapters could have been by itself subject for a monograph; such a monograph, though, would have been incomplete because it would reflect but a segment of the organic whole of medieval Islamic civilization with reference to the unifying theme of knowledge. As it is, each segment gains meaning not independently but from juxtaposition with the next, and leads to the cumulative effect of substantiating the author’s initial thesis.

Readers with sundry interests will find in the several chapters insightful discussions of their field of specialization documented with a large mass of source material awaiting further analysis and study—as will graduate students subjects for untold dissertations. Merely as examples of some of the many gems in the book I would like to direct attention to the extreme reserve and circumspection with which comparative Semitic material is used to describe the pre-Islamic situation in Arabia (ch. I), the inimitable little chapter on the plural of knowledge (ch. III, in conscious reference to which I used the word “knowledges” in the plural above), the translation of the introductory sections from the *Abkār al-afkār* by al-Āmidī, a very significant author the study of whose non-legal thought has been unduly neglected in Western Islamic studies (ch. VII,3), and the uncommonly pithy last chapter on knowledge and society, which, with its sections on the personal failings of scholars and on knowledge in its relation to money and power (ch. VIII,4) constitutes part and parcel of Rosenthal’s larger project on “Man versus society in Islam.”

Classical orientalism, of whose heroic—and final—stage Rosenthal was the most brilliant representative, was a discipline that in its best

moments encouraged asking such fundamental and seemingly essentializing questions about civilizations, but it also provided the requisite method, control, and tools to answer them. Knowledge triumphant defines medieval Islam, if any single concept can, as it defines the man who wrote it.

Dimitri Gutas  
Yale University  
August 2006



## INTRODUCTION

Civilizations tend to revolve around meaningful concepts of an abstract nature which more than anything else give them their distinctive character. Such concepts are to be found at the very beginning of a rising civilization. Or they may signalize, when they first make their appearance, an entirely new departure toward the eventual transformation of the environment hospitable to them. In the course of time, they may undergo changes of tone and of volume. Such changes may be minor and merely serve to strengthen the hold exercised by the concepts before. But they also may provide the old concepts with new meanings. This signifies a fundamental change or a major break in the structure of the civilization in which it happens. The concepts as such may continue to be used, thereby obscuring the meaning and depth of the change or even totally hiding the very fact of its existence. If, on the other hand, they cease to be used in any meaningful manner, it is a clear indication that the civilization which lived by them is no longer fully alive.

Being an integral and intimate part of their particular civilization which was molded as it were to their specifications, such concepts present members of other civilizations with great difficulties in the way of achieving a correct understanding and appreciation of them. Anything lying outside one's own experience cannot be comprehended in its true dimensions. Verbalization runs up against a powerful barrier. It is impossible to find words in other languages that come close to the fullness of meaning conveyed by the original term. "The tremendous symbolic significance of linguistic phenomena"<sup>1</sup> is no doubt a reality. Yet, it should not be altogether impossible to interpret important linguistic phenomena sensibly and without too great a distortion of their conceptual power. Fortunately, there is comparatively little danger of distorting the significance of the concept of *ilm* in Islam.

Arabic *ilm* is fairly well rendered by our "knowledge". However, "knowledge" falls short of expressing all the factual and emotional

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<sup>1</sup> In connection with the alleged lack of a word for "space" (*Raum*) in Greek, this was said by O. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, I, 120 (Munich 1920).

contents of *ʿilm*. For *ʿilm* is one of those concepts that have dominated Islam and given Muslim civilization its distinctive shape and complexion. In fact, there is no other concept that has been operative as a determinant of Muslim civilization in all its aspects to the same extent as *ʿilm*. This holds good even for the most powerful among the terms of Muslim religious life such as, for instance, *tawḥīd* “recognition of the oneness of God,” *ad-dīn* “the true religion”, and many others that are used constantly and emphatically. None of them equals *ʿilm* in depth of meaning and wide incidence of use. There is no branch of Muslim intellectual life, of Muslim religious and political life, and of the daily life of the average Muslim that remained untouched by the all-pervasive attitude toward “knowledge” as something of supreme value for Muslim being. *ʿIlm* is Islam, even if the theologians have been hesitant to accept the technical correctness of this equation. The very fact of their passionate discussion of the concept attests to its fundamental importance for Islam.

How this came about, how it continued to develop and grow, and what it meant historically—all this constitutes the proper subject of the following pages. Obviously, it is an extremely vast subject, dealing as it does with something talked and written about by uncounted people distributed over a large part of the globe in the course of many centuries. The relevant information had to be collected from many places. The material is plentiful, yet difficult to grasp and to penetrate. There are many areas where we have more material than would seem necessary. There are others for which we would wish to have more. There also is a constant temptation and, indeed, a seeming need to expand the immediate confines of our theme and to include the entire realm of intellectual perception and speculation, or, at least, a large part of it. It might easily be said that the subject of *ʿilm* in its totality is too vast for any comprehensive treatment and that it would have been better to restrict the investigation to the one or other facet of it. Nobody, certainly not this writer, would consider this an unjust suggestion. Happily, some, if very few, monographs on particular segments of the subject do exist. Many more will have to be written in the future. However, it certainly seems to serve a useful purpose to call attention, in one volume, to the multitude of important problems that call for their solutions. It can do no harm to highlight the very real importance of the concept as a

whole by studying, however briefly and rapidly, many of its major implications. The reader must not expect to find a full discussion of details or a review of all the available literature. Specimens must suffice to provide a substantial frame-work. Further bits and chunks of material can always be fitted into it as the need arises.

I have spent what I feel to be reasonable efforts to gain access to the primary literature. Many gaps remain which ought to be filled before a clear historical picture will emerge. Much of the oldest stage is lost, probably for ever. Only a small percentage of the later sources exists in print. The work of an important author may be preserved, or be accessible, only in part, while it ought to be known and studied to its full extent, in order to gain a correct appreciation of his position. In some cases, manuscripts had to be used, although printed texts do exist. Often, it was necessary to do without potentially important material known to exist but inaccessible. Everybody working in any field of Islamic studies is familiar with these and similar technical difficulties.

In connection with the present work, I had to contend with a more formidable handicap. Any historical problem must be viewed from a modern vantage point, resulting from the author's understanding of the state of the problem in his own time and cultural environment. A vast amount of thought has gone into the problem of knowledge in the modern West. The great discussion of the earlier years, particularly the seventeenth century, may be profitably compared and contrasted with what we find in the Muslim world. This has been considered outside the scope of the present work. However, I am also not prepared to claim that my reading has provided me with sufficient clarity as to what might constitute an acceptable modern position, a sort of rough and, perhaps, superficial but widely agreed upon understanding of the fundamental implications, with regard to the basic character and the multiple aspects of "knowledge." I can only hope that the resulting feeling of discomfort and uncertainty which has been bothering me all those years I have been working on the subject has not affected the inner core of my argumentation.

The eternal problem of translation shows itself here at its most intractable. Every term translated is a term distorted, no matter how much care has been spent on finding the most suitable English equivalent. For one, the English terms themselves are by no means unequivocal. They may suggest different conceptions to different

people. But then, the Arabic terms, too, are never unequivocal. The distinctions among them—all, as a rule, very subtle in nature—were not always observed with sufficient precision, even by writers aware of the technical intricacies of the choice of terms. It was possible for the same author to adhere strictly to technical terminology in one place, and make loose use of the same term in another. The terms *ilm* and *maʿrifah*, for instance, could be used as plain synonyms. They were also differentiated enough to be used for defining each other. They could be treated as contrary and almost mutually exclusive concepts of mental activity. Or they could designate quite different and clearly defined subject matters. Various English terms can be used to translate them, but wherever this is done, the coherence created by terminology, which is strongly felt in Arabic, is severed. An additional problem in the particular case of *ilm* and *maʿrifah* is peculiar to English which does not share with French or German the distinction between *savoir-connaître* or *wissen-kennen* which often approximates the one that exists between the two Arabic roots. Except using the untranslated Arabic terms or adding them in strategic positions wherever deemed necessary or making some artificial and potentially misleading distinction in translation between “knowledge” and “cognition,” “knowledge” and “gnosis,” “knowledge of” and “knowledge about” or the like, as has been inconsistently attempted in the following pages, not much can be done about this situation. The realm of abstract speculation, which is the foundation of all higher civilization, is a realm of terms, without which the human mind cannot operate. Transference from one language to another always disturbs unique thought patterns. It can lead at best to approximations. The realization of these facts is, perhaps, the master key to the understanding of our subject.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE KNOWLEDGE BEFORE KNOWLEDGE

Our information on pre-Islamic Arabia, especially with regard to the intellectual level achieved in the central portion of the peninsula, remains very limited. Newly found material and a deepened and concentrated study of the available evidence have not changed, unfortunately, the general validity of this statement. As a rule, we have to be satisfied with inferences drawn from meager and often dubious data. We cannot be quite sure concerning the character and extent of the vocabulary employed for intellectual perception, much less so about the exact use to which this vocabulary was put.<sup>1</sup> The poetry believed to be pre-Islamic is our only serviceable source. We may, however, assume that the vocabulary of the Qur'ân reflects an earlier situation with a considerable degree of accuracy, except where it can be shown that old words were filled with subtly changed meanings or that new words were borrowed or coined. It also seems a rather safe assumption that, if there are basic roots not attested in either pre-Islamic poetry or the Qur'ân, they did exist in pre-Islamic usage. Altogether, we can be assured of the existence in pre-Islamic Arabia of an extensive and refined vocabulary for the expression of a variety of mental activities.

A Semitist looking at this vocabulary will be struck immediately by the fact that Arabic roots expressing mental activity have no clear-cut correspondences in other Semitic languages or appear to enjoy only a very restricted existence in the one or other of them. It is true that measured against the immense variety of spoken usage, the little that came to be enshrined in the preserved written documents of ancient Semitic languages is, indeed, insignificant. The gaps in our information are too wide and numerous to allow us to draw unambiguous and safe conclusions under most conditions. Many Semitic speech forms have gone entirely unrecorded. Some, lost until very recently, have been recovered to a degree. Others are not likely ever to become known again. On the other hand, it may be assumed that whatever concepts entered the mainstream

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. T. Nöldeke, in *WZKM*, III (1889), 101 f.

of intellectual life could not have failed to be recorded somewhere in literature and those that were not were, in fact, outside the pale of effective conceptual life. For instance, the common Arabic root *sh-ʿ-r* “to know” is, it seems, attested only once in ancient Hebrew, that is, in Deuteronomy 32:17 where we read: “whom their fathers had not known (*šʿarūm*).” The correspondence of the Hebrew root *š-ʿ-r* in this passage with Arabic *sh-ʿ-r* was recognized by modern scholars and is referred to in some dictionaries.<sup>2</sup> It is still overlooked or goes unacknowledged by many modern students of the Bible. Since, however, *š-ʿ-r* occurs here in parallelism with *y-d-ʿ* “to know,” its meaning and, consequently, its connection with the Arabic root is as certain as anything in the field of ancient Semitic lexicography. Now, what does this occurrence in Hebrew mean in its uniqueness? Does it indicate that the rarity of the attestation of the root is the result of mere chance? This would seem unlikely. Or is *š-ʿ-r* an obsolete or, possibly, dialectal root? This could very well be the case, considering that its only occurrence is in a poem. These are questions that cannot be answered at the present stage of our knowledge. It remains a fact that roots common and widely used in Arabic for various facets of mental activity are unusual or, apparently, unknown elsewhere in the close-knit circle of Semitic languages.

### 1. THE ROOT ʿ-l-m

While the lack of correspondence for Arabic roots denoting mental activity in other Semitic languages is remarkable, it is no less remarkable that in turn, *y-d-ʿ*, the common Semitic root for “to know,” is not used in the Arabic with which we are familiar. *ʾ-d-ʿ* is found in practically all other Semitic languages. This includes Ethiopic which, in addition to *aydaʿa* from the root *y-d-ʿ*, uses (*amara*) *aʾmara* belonging to the root *ʾ-m-r*, in its meaning of “to see” best represented in Akkadian, a situation for which one may compare Greek *oida* and Latin *video*.

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<sup>2</sup> A connection between Arabic *sh-ʿ-r* and Aramaic *s-ʿ-r* has been suggested at times. It is not impossible, but it is neither clearly established nor necessarily supported by the meanings of *s-ʿ-r* (to visit, visitate, investigate, do, etc.) in the Aramaic dialects in which the root occurs.

Later Muslim epistemological speculation tried to attribute some specific kind of perception to *sh-ʿ-r*, cf., for instance, az-Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, I, 134 (Būlāq 1318–19), on *sūrah* 2:9/8; G. Vajda, *Recherches sur la philosophie et la Kabbale*, 388 (Paris and The Hague 1962).

It would seem probable that the terms employed for the expression of mental activity of any kind evolved slowly in human consciousness. In all likelihood, they were formed very gradually in the course of time in analogy to more primitive notions expressing, originally, physical perceptions and activities or, perhaps, magical ideas.<sup>3</sup> We also find, for instance, that individual Indo-European languages have quite different words for "knowledge." More precisely, certain roots were specialized in this sense in some Indo-European languages, while other roots prevailed elsewhere. Terms to express mental activity were gained not only through the process of specialization of primary roots, but, in addition, basic concepts were also often expressed by secondary modifications of primary roots. An example among many is Greek *epistamai*, *epistêmé*, which is widely considered to be a dialectal form of *ephistêmi*, from the root meaning "to stand" with the preposition *epi*, English "to understand." Greek *epistamai* has a rather striking parallel, although no Greek influence of any sort seems to be involved, in Arabic *w-q-f* 'alá "to become acquainted with," literally, "to stand (or stop) at."

The common possession by the Semitic languages of a root "to know" ( $y\text{-}d\text{-}^{\text{c}}$ ) is therefore no doubt another indication of the close relationship of all the Semitic languages<sup>4</sup> and the comparatively recent date of their dispersion. All the more so does the non-existence of the root  $y\text{-}d\text{-}^{\text{c}}$  in Arabic and its replacement by other roots suggest some special development peculiar to the Arabian environment, which led to the rejection of  $y\text{-}d\text{-}^{\text{c}}$  and the preference shown for other roots.

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<sup>3</sup> An instructive attempt to derive "knowing" from "doing" in the Greek mind and to trace this development on the basis of expressions for "knowledge" in Greek thought before Plato was undertaken by B. Snell, *Die Ausdrücke für den Begriff des Wissens in der vorplatonischen Philosophie* (Berlin 1924. *Philologische Untersuchungen*, 29). The study still bears reading, although the use of Greek as a language of high civilization is now known to date back into much more remote times and the possibility to recover the original concrete notions of abstract terms is correspondingly more remote.

No primitive concrete notion can be associated with Semitic  $y\text{-}d\text{-}^{\text{c}}$ , whose antiquity is fully born out by its use in Akkadian, cf. *The Assyrian Dictionary*, VII, 20 ff. (Chicago 1960). The etymological speculations reported by G. J. Botterweck, "*Gott erkennen*" im Sprachgebrauch des Alten Testaments, 11 (Bonn 1951, *Bonner Biblische Beiträge* 2), seem inconclusive, regardless of how much it would support the theory of a concrete origin for  $y\text{-}d\text{-}^{\text{c}}$ , if the root were to be connected with *yad* "hand."

<sup>4</sup> That is, in the narrow sense, disregarding the relationship of Semitic with Egyptian and Hamitic.

Our general rule that Arabic roots expressing mental activity lack correspondences in other Semitic languages holds good for the most important one among them, Arabic  $\text{'l-m}$  "to know." The occurrence of a derivation of  $\text{'l-m}$  in the meaning of "to know" has been suggested for Ugaritic by J. Aistleitner.<sup>5</sup> However, for the two passages listed, the context of one is quite uncertain, and the other is more commonly, and with much greater probability, interpreted as containing the word *âlam* "eternity." The root *âlama* listed in the Ethiopic dictionary as of rare occurrence in the language and as meaning "*signare, consignare literis*" could possibly be disregarded as being a loan from Arabic. This, however, would not be correct, for the root  $\text{'l-m}$  does occur in South Arabian inscriptions, and Ethiopic *âlama* must be related to the South Arabian evidence.<sup>6</sup> The latter requires closer study. We are greatly hampered in this respect by the uncertainties still surrounding the interpretation of much of the South Arabian material. In this particular instance, however, we are on comparatively safe ground. Most recent interpreters of the inscriptions containing the root  $\text{'l-m}$  seem to agree on its semantic relationship to Arabic *âlam* "sign, mark." In addition to a proper name *lmn*,<sup>7</sup> South Arabian inscriptions have a verb  $\text{'l-m}$  in the basic conjugation and in the conjugation with prefixed *t-*, and both are generally translated "to sign." The meaning of "document" is assigned to the noun *lm* used in connection with the verb, apparently on the basis of the assumption that a document is something "marked" or "signed" and, therefore, legally binding.<sup>8</sup> There exists, however, a passage

<sup>5</sup> *Wörterbuch der ugaritischen Sprache*, 232 (Berlin 1963, *Berichte der Sächsischen Akad. d. Wiss., philol.-hist. Kl.*).

<sup>6</sup> For the situation in another Ethiopian language, Tigrê, cf. E. Littmann and M. Höfner, *Wörterbuch der Tigrê-Sprache*, 451 f. (Wiesbaden 1962). As shown by the authors of the dictionary, the derivations from the root  $\text{'l-m}$  found in Tigrê, too, hark back mainly to the meaning of mark or sign. Those signifying teaching or learning seem to be less well represented and can be assumed to be loans from Arabic.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique*, no. 2774, see A. Jamme, in J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 2nd ed., 509 (Princeton 1955). The same inscription also contains a proper name derived from  $\gamma-d-\text{'l}$ . Cf. also *RÉS*, no. 3199:3. For a proper name *lmt*, cf. also A. Jamme, *Sabaeen and Hasaeen Inscriptions*, 38 (Rome 1966, *Studi Semitici* 23).

<sup>8</sup> References for the verb in the basic conjugation ( $\text{'l-m}$ ): *RÉS*, no. 3566:23; A. Fakhry (G. Ryckmans), *An Archaeological Journey to Yemen*, no. 3:9 (Cairo 1952), cf. A. F. L. Beeston, *A Descriptive Grammar of Epigraphic South Arabian*, 69 (London 1962). For the *t*-conjugation ( $t-\text{'l-m}$ ): *RÉS*, nos. 3688:12, 3691:10, 3692:7, 3693:5, 3854:10, 3879:7, 3951:6,



in an inscription which reads *ʿlm bhw tʿlm*, translated in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, IV, 74:16 f. “*signum quo monitus est.*” The basis for this translation is again clearly the assumed connection with Arabic *ʿalam* “sign, mark.” Another recent publication proposes the translation, “the oracular vision whereby he was instructed,”<sup>9</sup> thus bringing the verbal form *tʿlm* more closely in line with Arabic *taʿallama* “to study.” However, it would seem that in this passage, the verb is a derivative of the noun and that the noun, whatever its precise meaning, is more easily connected with “mark” or “sign” than with “knowledge.” Similarly, the proposed translation of the verbal form *lytʿlmn* “sollen angezeigt werden, anzuzeigen,” would seem to point to a basic meaning of “to be marked.”<sup>10</sup> In sum, notwithstanding all the fearful uncertainties of interpretation, the South Arabian evidence favors the conclusion that ʿ*l-m* in South Arabian does not mean “to know,” but is semantically close to Arabic *ʿalam* “mark, sign.”

The only other likely point of contact of the Arabic root ʿ*l-m* with another Semitic language<sup>11</sup> appears to be the name of a locality or, more precisely, two different localities mentioned in the Old Testament. One of them occurs in Joshua 21:18 as *ʿAlmôn*, whereas the corresponding passage in 1 Chronicles 6:45 has *ʿĀlemet*. The other place bears the name of *ʿAlmôn Diblātāyʿmā* and is mentioned twice in Numbers 33:46 f. The correct form of the name of the first locality cannot be established beyond doubt, as is shown by the difference between Joshua and Chronicles and, in addition, by the Greek transcriptions (the use of initial Greek *g*, however, does not necessarily call in doubt the original Semitic ʿ of the name). In any event, an interpretation as \*ʿ*alamân* “the two way signs” suggests itself for *ʿAlmôn*. The ending *-n*, instead of *-m*,

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and 4765:2. The meanings of “to produce, to promulgate,” which we find occasionally assigned to the verb (*RÉS*, no. 4771; Fakhry, no. 30 *bis*: 3 f.), would seem to be merely free variants of the meaning “to sign” (which is used by Beeston, 69 f.). References for the noun *ʿlm*: *RÉS*, no. 2876:3, 4772 (?); Fakhry, no. 33: 4 (Beeston, 70).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Beeston, 58.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *RÉS*, no. 4176:5, 8 f. In *RÉS*, no. 2724:3, the translation of *ḏbh tʿlm* “par lequel a été informé...” is quite uncertain.

<sup>11</sup> A number of proper names found in Greek inscriptions, such as *Ilmos*, *Alamos*, *Olimé*, *Olemos*, have been connected with ʿ*l-m*, cf. H. Wuthnow, *Die semitischen Menschnamen*, 157 (Leipzig 1930). However, their interpretation is uncertain. Moreover, these proper names reflect the situation in Arabic, and not that in other Semitic languages.

is not surprising in an ancient form, especially not in Moabite territory where the latter of the two places is located.<sup>12</sup>

It can thus be said that in the rather sparse occurrences of the root  $\text{ʿ-l-m}$  outside Arabic, a semantic connection with “mark, sign, way sign” appears indicated. It is therefore not unjustified to suggest that the meaning of “to know” is an extension, peculiar to Arabic, of an original concrete term, namely, “way sign.”<sup>13</sup> A similar development has been suggested for the Coptic verb *sooun* meaning “to know”; its supposed root *w-s-n* has been claimed to stand in the same relationship to Semitic South Arabian *w-th-n* “stone marking a borderline” as does German *merken* to *Mark* or *Markstein*.<sup>14</sup> Be this as it may, the connection between “way sign” and “knowledge” is particularly close and takes on especial significance in the Arabian environment. For the Bedouin, the knowledge of way signs, the characteristic marks in the desert which guided him on his travels and in the execution of his daily tasks, was the most important and immediate knowledge to be acquired. In fact, it was the kind of knowledge on which his life and well-being principally depended. Thus, it is easy to see how in a largely nomadic environment, the general concept of knowledge was able to develop from the concrete process of being acquainted with “way signs.” Corroborative evidence for such an origin of Arabic  $\text{ʿ-l-m}$  “to know” may be found in one of the roots expressing the opposite idea, namely,  $j-h-l$  “to be ignorant.” For the concept of

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the ending *-ôn* in Biblical place names such as *Shôm'rôn* Samaria, cf. for instance, G. R. Driver, in *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, LXXVII (1945), 9, XCI (1959) 158; J. G. Février, in *Semitica*, I (1948), 34 f.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. also such derivations as *ma'lam* “known region” (cf. T. Nöldeke, *Fünf Mo'allagât*, II, 28, in *Sitzungsberichte der k. Akad. d. Wiss. in Wien, philos.-hist. Kl.*, 142 [1900]) and its opposite, *majhal* (*Lisân al-'Arab*, XIII, 138 [Bûlâq 1300–08]: *arḍ majhal* “land where there is no guidance,” *arḍ majhûlah* “land in which there are no way signs and no mountains”).

It may be noted further that in Modern South Arabian, derivations from the root  $\text{ʿ-l-m}$  in the meaning of “sign” are known although, probably, they are loans from Arabic, while for “to know,” the verbs *ʿedah*  $\text{ʿ-y-d-ʿ}$ , *ʿerob*  $\text{ʿ-r-f}$ , and *teb* are in use, cf. W. Leslau, *Lexique Soqotri*, 58, 198, 311, 325 f. (Paris 1938).

It was, perhaps, inevitable that later Muslim etymological speculation should derive *ʿilm* from *ʿalâmah* which means guidance and direction,” as was done by Abû ʿAlî al-Fârîsî (d. 377/987), who is quoted to this effect by al-ʿAynî, *Umdat al-qârî*, I, 380 (Constantinople 1308). Cf. also p. 19, n. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. W. Vycichl, in *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung*, V (1957), 10–25, and I. M. D'yakonov, *Semito-Khamitskie yazyki*, 46 (Moscow 1964).

“not knowing,” Arabic shares with other Semitic languages the root  $n\text{-}k\text{-}r$ .  $\text{ʃ}\text{-}h\text{-}l$ , which in the Arabic known to us is the ordinary opposite of “to know,” has, it seems, no Semitic cognates. There is a good deal of plausibility to explaining  $\text{ʃ}\text{-}h\text{-}l$  as a secondary formation from the well-known root  $\text{j}\text{-}w\text{-}l$ , meaning “to go around.” “Going around” could be wandering around in circles, roaming about aimlessly and not knowing where one is going. This, then, would be the exact counterpart of a “knowing” conceived as guidance provided by way signs in an environment in which life depended upon such knowledge, and suffering and death were the likely results of being ignorant of it.

Semantic speculations of this nature are, of course, impossible of exact verification. They gain in likelihood through parallels from more recent and better known periods. One such parallel has been shown to exist in modern ‘Irâqî Arabic.<sup>15</sup> There, *indall* “to be guided” tends to assume the general meaning of knowing or knowing one’s way or the whereabouts of things. If one believes in the possibility of recovering biconsonantal prototypes of existing triconsonantal roots, a connection of  $\text{ʿ}l\text{-}m$  with the preposition *ʿal* suggests itself, in the sense of having come “upon” something and thus being acquainted with it (cf. also Arabic  $w\text{-}q\text{-}f$  *ʿalâ*, mentioned before) or, perhaps, in the sense of seizing the “high” points and orienting oneself with their help.<sup>16</sup> Such a rather fanciful derivation could again be interpreted as leading to a knowledge based originally upon outstanding signs or markings in one’s environment, and we might find here the starting point for the noun formation *ʿalam* “way sign” as the intermediary between the biconsonantal stage and the meaning of the verbal root “to know.” Needless to say, the further we go into this sort of speculation, the less certain does the ground become under our feet.<sup>17</sup> Even the comparatively conservative theory that “knowledge” in general was originally the particular knowledge of way signs may not be acceptable to everybody and be open to—no less uncertain—

<sup>15</sup> Cf. G. Krotkoff, in *JAOs*, LXXXIV (1964), 170 f.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. A.-S. Marmardji, *La Lexicographie arabe à la lumière du bilittéralisme*, 129 ff. (Jerusalem 1937).

<sup>17</sup> It may be noted that Muslim philologists, who in general were fond of etymological speculation, did not have much to say in connection with *ʿlm*, because they felt that common words offered little chance of explanation by way of etymology. Cf., however, also above p. 10, n. 2, and below, p. 19, n. 1. For the different situation with respect to  $\text{ʿ}r\text{-}f$ , see below, p. 114.

arguments directed against it. The proposed combination of “way signs” and “knowledge” remains, however, a suggestive hypothesis for explaining the concept of knowledge prevalent in early central Arabia. Knowledge there was a rather primitive groping after elementary material data under quite restricted social conditions. These data were not necessarily connected by some kind of material or logical nexus. Most of them were considered valuable by themselves, and knowledge of any one of them could be aspired to and appreciated as a useful accomplishment. We may go a step farther and say that a similar conception of the meaning and value of knowledge can be discovered in much of the scholarly production of Muslim civilization at a much later date. It is tempting to see in the remarkable predilection shown for the presentation of information in a more or less random, unconnected fashion a survival of the very ancient Arabian approach to knowledge in an environment very different from that in which those particular modes of thought had their early origin. However, great caution is again indicated. Any such original meaning of the root *‘l-m* can have been truly alive only in an extremely remote period antedating by far the ages for which we might claim to possess some sort of concrete historical understanding. When we encounter *‘ilm* in actual use, it had long been a generalized abstract term unconnected with crude material data.

## 2. THE EVIDENCE OF POETRY

Poetry is practically the only intellectual pursuit which we can be positive was highly developed and much practiced in pre-Islamic Arabia. It seems certain that the Arabic word for poet, *shā‘ir*, meant originally “one who knows,” and the word for poetry, *shi‘r*, “knowledge.”<sup>18</sup> What kind of knowledge was implied here is a moot

<sup>18</sup> Cf., especially, I. Goldziher, *Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie*, I, 17 ff. (Leiden 1896–99). Arab lexicographers define *shi‘r* “poetry” as being knowledge, cf. *Lisān al-‘Arab*, VI, 76 f.: “*Shi‘r* is metrical speech. The term became specialized in this meaning because of the noble character of (such speech) gained through meter and rhyme, even if any knowledge may be (called) *shi‘r*, in the same manner in which the term *fiqh* (meaning knowledge and understanding) was specialized in the meaning of science of the religious law.” According to a remark attributed to the caliph ‘Umar and others, poetry was the only “knowledge” worthy of the name possessed by the Arabs, before the divine revelation brought them a better knowledge, cf. Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī, *Kutāb az-Ẓīnah*, ed. H. F. al-Hamdānī, I, 96 f. (Cairo 1957–58).

question beyond our ability to answer with any amount of certainty. It could have been magical knowledge. On the whole, it would seem to be the more likely assumption that the poet was the person who was able to handle data beyond those of the most immediate practical experience, the person who was considered knowledgeable, alone of his fellow men gifted with insight and the ability to express his insight. If this was the case, it would mean that at the time the term came into usage, knowledge was a rare and restricted commodity and that it was a knowledge far removed from any scientific and scholarly pursuits. However, this hypothetical original significance of the term may have been felt only in the earliest, pre-historic times. The Greeks and the Romans did not ordinarily think of the "poet" as a "doer," nor does anyone today unless he wants to show off his learned understanding of word origins. Likewise, the Arabs in the centuries preceding the coming of Islam presumably did not see simply "knowers" in their poets, even if "knower" was the original meaning.

Turning now to the more concrete evidence we have from pre-Islamic poetry—that is, from poems that have come down to us connected with the names of poets assumed to have lived before the coming of Islam—, we are forced to admit that the ground we are entering upon is not much safer than the one of semantic and etymological speculation we have just left. Our task is not one of gaining some sort of overall picture of pre-Islamic life and conditions or of concepts and beliefs that antedated Islam. We want to obtain information on specific attitudes that may, or may not, have existed in pre-Islamic Arabia. Therefore, the problem of genuineness is of more than usual importance in each individual instance. Sporadic statements and reflections on particular attitudes toward mental activity and intellectual perception can often be suspected of being later insertions or inventions. They were also susceptible to much subsequent modification which, though minor in appearance, may profoundly affect their significance for our particular quest. Individual words are easily replaced in Arabic poetry by others, which may not change very greatly the general drift of meaning but play havoc with subtler distinctions. At the present state of our knowledge, the only feasible procedure is therefore to consider as genuine almost everything that is transmitted as pre-Islamic, while at the same time keeping in mind that some legitimate doubt attaches to every detail.

Even so, the material that is of use for our investigation is quite limited. Obviously, it would serve no purpose here to try to stress the amount of factual knowledge possessed by pre-Islamic Arabs as evidenced by their poetry. What we want to find out is the amount and kind of reflection that might have existed concerning the abstract concept of knowledge and its meaning as well as its significance. Poetry as such is certainly not the appropriate vehicle for conveying such information. The particular individual situation of the poet determined the amount of factual knowledge which he himself might have possessed and which was, in theory, available to him. Variations in this respect must have been very great, depending on the poet's relative location vis-à-vis the Mediterranean civilization of the time. Whatever his education, however, and regardless of the original meaning of the Arabic word for "poet," poets did not feel called upon to apply themselves to the purveyance of scientific information. Even less so would they have considered it their task to use their poetical talent for speculation about the nature and definition of knowledge. Their primary concern was the realm of the senses and its sublimation not into intellectual abstractions but into purer forms of sensual enjoyment. The root <sup>ʿ</sup>*l-m* and its opposite *j-h-l*, as well as other roots of related meanings, occur frequently in pre-Islamic poetry, but references to abstract knowledge are rare, and almost non-existent. Among the observations that may be made in this connection, it would seem that three points mainly deserve attention in our context.

In the first place, we find occasional indications of an awareness, which was certainly shared by every intelligent contemporary, that knowledge is something gradated, which has to be acquired, which possesses intrinsic value, and which has its circumscribed limits. Knowledge is something that sets the individual apart from his fellow men. A half-verse ascribed to an-Nâbighah adh-Dhubaynî runs:

He who is ignorant of something is not like the one who knows.<sup>19</sup>

Bishr b. Abî Khâzim exclaims dramatically:

Is the experienced person like the one who does not know?!<sup>20</sup>

Ignorance can be overcome only slowly by gathering a growing

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. W. Ahlwardt, *The Divans of the Six Ancient Arabic Poets*, 25, no. 23:11 (London 1870). The Qur'ân 39:9/12 asks, "Are those who know and those who do not know equals?"

<sup>20</sup> Bishr b. Abî Khâzim, *Diwân*, ed. 'Izzat Ḥasan, 180 (Damascus 1379/1960).

amount of information over a long period of time, as stated in a famous verse from Ṭarafah's *Mu'allaqah*:

The days will show you what you are ignorant of,  
And someone for whom you did not provide (as your messenger) will  
bring you the news.<sup>21</sup>

How to acquire knowledge through a constant search for more and more experience, is also described in verses said to be by a certain A'shâ Jillân, about whose lifetime nothing certain is known and who may as well have lived in Islamic times:

If you desire knowledge or the like  
Or someone present giving information about someone absent,  
Probe the earth with all its objects (*asmâ'ihâ*)  
And probe companion with companion!<sup>22</sup>

This would seem to be an interesting example of a rather concrete and definitely atomistic concept of knowledge, of the sort that was inherent in the root *ʿl-m* according to our attempted semantic derivation.

The future is something that escapes even the most knowledgeable of men, as we learn from Zuhayr's *Mu'allaqah*:

I know about today and yesterday before it,  
But I am blind to the knowledge of what is going to be tomorrow.<sup>23</sup>

The same thought was expressed, for instance, also by Ṭarafah:

The woman who blames me says, although she does not have  
Knowledge of what is to be tomorrow and thereafter...<sup>24</sup>

Most important, there is a knowledge that is beyond the reach of human beings but is within the power of an omniscient deity. Again, the source is Zuhayr's *Mu'allaqah*:

You should not conceal from God what is in your minds,  
In the hope that it will remain secret. Whatever may be concealed from  
God, He knows.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 60, no. 4:102; M. Seligsohn, *Diwân de Ṭarafa*, 108 (Paris 1901. *Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études*, 128). On the relationship between knowledge and experience later on in Islam, cf. below, pp. 276 f.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *The Diwân of al-A'shâ*, ed. R. Geyer, 276 (London 1928, *E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series*, N. S. 6).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Nöldeke, *Fünf Mo'allaqât*, III, 18, verse 48 (*Sitzungsberichte ... Wien*, 144 [1901]).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 187.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Nöldeke, *Fünf Mo'allaqât*, III, 16, 30, verse 27. For an early Islamic poet, al-'Ajjâj, expressing the same idea, cf. *Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache*, II, 52a, s. v. *k-t-m* (Wiesbaden 1957).

According to T. Nöldeke, Zuhayr's poem is to be dated around 600 A. D. Nöldeke expressed well founded doubts about the genuineness of the verse; it may be genuine, he says, and may not have undergone Muslim influence, but the verse that follows upon it in the poem could, in his opinion, hardly be given even the benefit of the doubt. Thus, our dilemma is obvious. It is quite possible that the idea of an omniscient deity was widely known all over Arabia in pre-Islamic times and had appealed to the pagan poet. Yet, the possibility of Islamic influence cannot be ruled out. There are no criteria on which to base a valid scholarly judgment.

In the second place, the differentiation of various degrees of certainty in intellectual perception, expressed by a variety of terms, was clearly recognized. This would, in any case, be our conclusion on the basis of the employment of the relevant terminology in the Qur'ân.<sup>26</sup> Also, a lack of this kind of insight into mental processes would presuppose an infinitely more primitive society than pre-Islamic Arabia is likely to have harbored. However, we can also cite at least one express statement from a verse ascribed to 'Anṭarah:

I do know in a way that is different from guesswork (*'ilman laysa bi-ẓ-ẓanmī*) that  
When a man's master is lowly, he himself is, too.<sup>27</sup>

Thirdly, and most significantly, numerous verses make it quite clear that knowledge was considered a heightened form of reality and truth. Instead of saying that something is so, the poet would say, as in the verse just cited, that he *knows* that it is so. The poet may describe himself as the depository of such knowledge. Much more frequently, another party is invoked to testify, through their knowledge, to the correctness of the statement the poet wishes to make. This other party may be the poet's tribe, his home, his enemies, even horses or feet. This peculiar use of the concept of knowledge constitutes the most common occasion by far for the use of *'l-m* in ancient Arabic poetry. Nobody reading even a small amount of Arabic verse can fail to be struck by the force and frequency of this particular device. As rare as are verses dealing with other aspects of knowledge, those in which the poet emphasizes a point by referring to someone's knowledge of it are exceedingly frequent. There can be no doubt that this is a truly pre-Islamic

<sup>26</sup> Cf. below, pp. 30 f.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 68, no. 12:13.



Arabian conceit, which continued into later Islamic times. The variations are numerous. Only a few may be cited here:

We have inherited glory, the Ma'add *know*.<sup>28</sup>

I am the one whose excellence the Ma'add *know*.<sup>29</sup>

The Bakr *know* that we...<sup>30</sup>

The tribe *knows*... that you...<sup>31</sup>

*Know*, woman, that I am a man...!<sup>32</sup>

The people have come to *know* (that he has all good qualities).<sup>33</sup>

The horses (*khayl*) *know*... that you...<sup>34</sup>

Many horsemen do I have whom I *know*

To bear with patience repeated attacks and wounds.<sup>35</sup>

Why do you not ask the people, O daughter of Mâlik,

If you are *ignorant* of what you do not *know* (and everybody will tell you about my prowess).<sup>36</sup>

The people *know* that you are a lord.<sup>37</sup>

Horses *know* when they snort on the field of death...<sup>38</sup>

On a supple (foot) that *knows* where it is going.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Qays b. al-Khaṭīm, *Dīwān*, 60 (Baghdād 1381/1962). Similar uses of 'l-m can be found elsewhere in the work of this poet.

On verses beginning: *qad 'alimat*, cf. M. Ullmann, *Untersuchungen zur Rağazpoesie*, 20 (Wiesbaden 1966).

<sup>29</sup> Imru'u l-Qays, in Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 158, no. 59:22.

<sup>30</sup> Ṭarafah, in Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 62, no. 5:51, 185. Cf. also 'Anṭarah and Zuhayr, in Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 51, no. 25:10, and 81, no. 4:5, as well as Abū Mihjan, *Dīwān*, ed. L. Abel, nos. 11:1, 13:2 (Leiden 1887).

<sup>31</sup> A'shā Hamdān (early Islamic), in *The Dīwān of al-A'shā*, ed. Geyer, 319, no. 8:20.

<sup>32</sup> 'Anṭarah, in Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 42, no. 19:19. Cf. also *ibid.*, 48, no. 21:80.

<sup>33</sup> A'shā Maymūn, in *The Dīwān of al-A'shā*, ed. Geyer, 10, no. 1:40. Cf. also *ibid.*, 160, no. 36:18, etc.

<sup>34</sup> A'shā Hamdān, in *The Dīwān of al-A'shā*, ed. Geyer, 319, no. 8:23. Cf. also an-Nābighah adh-Dhubaynī, in Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 27, no. 26:12.

<sup>35</sup> 'Anṭarah, in Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 49, no. 22:1. Cf. also *ibid.*, 42, no. 19:14.

<sup>36</sup> From 'Anṭarah's *Mu'allaqah*, cf. Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 49; Nöldeke, *Fünf Mo'allaqāt*, II, 19, verse 43.

<sup>37</sup> Abū Dhu'ayb (time of the Prophet), *Dīwān*, ed. J. Hell, 34, no. 30c:4 (Hannover 1926). For examples from the poetry of Labīd, cf., for instance, *Sharḥ Dīwān Labīd*, ed. I. 'Abbās, 51, 186, 213, etc. (Kuwait 1962).

<sup>38</sup> 'Anṭarah, in Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 179.

<sup>39</sup> Abū Dhu'ayb, *Dīwān*, 26, no. 22:4.

How many a cup have I drunk for pleasure  
 And again, others trying to cure myself through them from it,  
 So that people will *know* that I am a man  
 Who stands with both feet in manly life.<sup>40</sup>

Khaybar *knows* that I am (so-and-so)...<sup>41</sup>

“Knowing” something means being a big step ahead of mere reality. It is a higher stage of experience. It serves as an appeal to man’s truer self. The conclusion that we have here a native Arabian forerunner of the important role knowledge was to play in Islamic civilization seems inescapable.

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For the pre-Islamic attitude toward knowledge, it would be of considerable significance, if the Qur’ānic term *jāhiliyyah*, which came to be used for the dark period before the advent of Islam, were certain to be an Arabic term current before the time of the Prophet. This, however, does not seem to be the case, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Thus, no illumination as to the pre-Islamic attitude toward knowledge can be derived from it.

Altogether, there is little that can be said about “knowledge” in pre-Islamic Arabia. There existed, it seems, an original elementary concept of knowledge as the piecemeal acquisition of material data. It was, in the course of time, replaced by, or rather, amalgamated with a concept of knowledge as something possessing different degrees of realization. Eventually, there came the additional insight that knowledge constituted a higher and truer form of reality. Such was “knowledge” in Arabia when Muḥammad came and forged the concept into the basic tool and objective of divine revelation, thus setting the stage for that reverence for knowledge which was to become the main theme of Islamic civilization.

<sup>40</sup> *The Dīwān of al-Aʿshā*, ed. Geyer, 121, no. 22:17 f.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. al-Wāqidi, *Maghāzī*, ed. M. Jones, 654 f. (London 1966); at-Ṭabarī, *Annales*, ed. M. J. de Goeje and others, I, 1577–80 (Leiden 1879–1901).

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE REVELATION OF KNOWLEDGE

The uncertainties which bothered us in the preceding chapter disappear as soon as we approach the Qur'ân. Here we have indeed "the full light of history," at least as far as the concept of knowledge is concerned. However, even history's fullest light falls concentrated only upon a few small spots and usually leaves most areas dimly lit by some weak and widely diffused light. As always, many problems of origin, analysis, and interpretation remain. Their final solution must be considered as something beyond our reach. But the overall import of all the questions raised and answers suggested leaves no room for doubt. Muḥammad's concept of "knowledge" set intellectual life in Islam on its basically unchangeable course. There was comparatively little that later influences and developments were able to accomplish by way of injecting new ideas into the fundamental structure of the Prophet's thought or by way of enriching it materially. Such influences and developments were, moreover, altogether unable to change its main thrust and effect.

#### 1. A WORD COUNT AND ITS MEANING

In all its derivations, the root *ʿ-l-m*—excluding, of course, the unrelated *ʿalam* "world"<sup>1</sup>—occurs in the Qur'ân with unusual

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<sup>1</sup> As may be expected, Muslim scholars sometimes connected *ʿalam* with *ʿilm* or *ʿalam*. Cf. ʿAbd-al-Qâhir al-Baghdâdî, *Uṣûl ad-dîn*. 34 (Istanbul 1346/1928, reprinted, n. y., n. p.): "*ʿĀlam* is everything that has knowledge and sense perception," but a combination with *ʿalam/ʿalâmah* is preferable. *Ālam* is "a designation for the angels, the jinn, and the human beings who possess knowledge." It is "the totality of bodies (substances) and accidents of which the Creator has knowledge" (cf. az-Zamakhsharî, *Kashshâf*, I, 43). In this case, *ʿilm*, and not *ʿalam*, is clearly meant. However, it is *ʿalam/ʿalâmah* which is adduced by the Imâm al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynî in explaining that *ʿalam* is called *ʿalam* because it is an indication set up to indicate the existence of the owner of the *ʿalam*. Likewise, the world with its substances, accidents, parts, and particles is a sign indicating the existence of the Lord, the owner of the world, cf. his *Luma' al-adillah*, ed. Fawqiyah Ḥusayn Maḥmûd, 76 (Cairo 1385/1965). The view expounded by ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahânî is not quite clear. With great if misplaced ingenuity, probably borrowed from some older source, he combines *ʿalam* with words of a similar

frequency. There are about 750 occurrences all told. Since the Qur'ân contains roughly something short of 78,000 words, it can be said that the derivations of the root  $^{\text{c}}l-m$  make up about one percent of its vocabulary. The auxiliary verb  $k-w-n$  "to be" occurs over 1,300 times, and the unavoidable  $q-w-l$  "to say" is found almost 1,700 times (which reveals something fundamental if obvious about later Muslim civilization, namely that its predilection for the spoken word in all its aspects has its roots in ancient Arabian tradition). Besides  $k-w-n$  and  $q-w-l$ , only the words *Allâh* "God," with over 2,800 occurrences, and *rabb* "master, Lord," with over 950 occurrences, surpass the root  $^{\text{c}}l-m$  by a large margin. The root  $^{\text{c}}m-n$  is found a few times more than  $^{\text{c}}l-m$ . This, however, takes into account not only the meaning of "to believe" but requires inclusion of the occurrences of the root in the basic conjugation, where the meaning is very different. Historically, and, presumably, also in the linguistic consciousness of the speaker, these various forms do not belong as closely together as do the various derivations of  $^{\text{c}}l-m$ . Thereafter, frequency figures fall off rather rapidly. From within the 450–550 range, we may mention  $^{\text{c}}t-y$  "to come,"  $k-f-r$ , which serves as the opposite of *âmana* "to believe,"  $r-s-l$  "(to send as) messenger," and *ard* "earth."

It may be doubted whether such unrefined statistical evidence has any significance at all. However, such doubts would seem to be unjustified in this particular case. Muḥammad's message was no abstract intellectual exercise. The Prophet was also not concerned with variety in the ideas he preached. On the contrary, he

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noun formation such as *khâtam* and *tâba'*, both meaning "seal," and interprets it as the "instrument" by which the world with all the substances and accidents it contains "is known" (or does he mean, "is marked," from *'alam*?). Thus, the world is instrumental in proving the existence of its Creator; cf. his *Muḥḥadât*, III, 141, s. *rad*.  $^{\text{c}}l-m$  (Cairo 1322, in the margin of Ibn al-Athîr, *Nihâyahî*). At-Tahânanawî is even more ambiguous. He also brings *'âlam* together with *khâtam* and *tâba'* and derives it from *'alam* / *'alâmah* as the designation for something through which something is known. He presumably did not think at all of "is marked," since he goes on to say that the word came to be used primarily for that "through which the Creator is known" (this would seem to be the only possible translation in this case). "It designates all the *existentia* with the exception of God, that is, the created things whether they are substances or accidents," which indicate the existence of a Necessary Originator; cf. his *Kashshâf iṣtilâhât al-funûn*, 1053 (Calcutta 1854–62). Notwithstanding all these speculations, however, by and large little was made of the suggestive, if completely wrong, etymology which brings *'âlam* together with the Arabic root  $^{\text{c}}l-m$ .

felt called upon to make his contemporaries conscious of a very few basic truths. The way to achieve this end was to repeat these truths constantly and singlemindedly, regardless of how much repetition this entailed. Using the same word or root over and over again was—and still is—the surest way to have the message it contains register in the minds of the listeners. It is evident that the terms which were truly important to the Prophet do indeed occur in the Qur'ân with greater frequency than all others. Vice versa, terms that expressed ideas which he did not consider vital elements of his preaching tend to appear low down on the scale in the tabulation of words. The correctness of this observation is in a way confirmed by the low frequency of certain terms which were to play important roles in Islam later on. They do occur in the Qur'ân and, in fact, were often propelled into their important roles on the basis of their occurrence in Qur'ânic passages. But they were of no special concern to Muḥammad during his lifetime. Therefore, they enjoy no prominence in the Qur'ân. For instance, “justice” (‘*d-l*) belongs to a root sparsely mentioned in it. This obviously does not mean that the Prophet might have thought little of justice as a political, ethical, or religious force. It does suggest that in the historical and ideational context of his preaching, there was no fundamental need to make much of the concept and all it stood for. Avoidance of the discussion of issues that are of no immediate concern is as necessary for political success as is firm and constant insistence upon those that are. We may be disappointed to find, for instance, that the word “freedom” (*hurriyah*) is not mentioned expressly in the Qur'ân. However, if it were, it would be merely incidental and of little significance; no matter how great a role the concept played at some later date, it could not have been a vital issue for Muḥammad requiring to be stressed and repeated constantly in his preaching. Considerations of this sort support the assumption that the frequency with which the root ‘*l-m* occurs in the Qur'ân is not a matter of chance. It is mentioned with such persistence that nobody could fail to notice it. It was a concept that the Prophet wanted to be noticed. It was one of the basic ideas he had made it his business to convey to his followers.

Another objection might be raised against the evaluation of the statistical evidence suggested here. At first glance, this objection may appear to possess some validity. However, in reality, it is

equally baseless. It could be said that *Allāh* "God" and *âmana* "to believe" (or its opposite, *k-f-r*) are strictly religious terms wherever they occur. *ʿ-l-m*, on the other hand, although it is used with a religious connotation, is also a common verb with an ordinary meaning. Thus, it may be argued, *ʿ-l-m* would inevitably occur quite frequently in any lengthy work regardless of its subject matter. In this respect, then, the use of *ʿ-l-m* should be compared with, say, *ʾ-t-y* "to come" which occurs very often without, of course, any special religious significance. This reasoning founders on three considerations. In the first place, the passages where *ʿ-l-m* occurs filled with a special meaning in the Qurʾānic context are much more numerous than are those where an incidental, secular usage may be assumed. Secondly, a concept expressing mental activity such as "knowing" (and the derived one of "teaching" is in fact something much less obtrusive than terms expressing physical activities such as "coming" or "saying." Occurrences of its use therefore are much less likely to be incidental. And thirdly, everything tends to show that Muḥammad did indeed attribute great significance to "knowledge" in the system of his religious thought. Even if the frequency of the occurrence of the root were to be reduced to a much smaller figure statistically, which need not be done, it would still be prominent enough to command attention. As it is, even the few supposedly incidental occurrences of *ʿ-l-m* do not really seem to be incidental and cannot be dismissed as such. Every single occurrence of the root forms part of a plan to condition receptive minds to "knowing" as a basic force in the new religion. No doubt, this was fully intended to be so. Moreover, the very fact that we have here a concept in which religious and secular terminology came together is a matter of profound significance which will require some further elaboration later on.

## 2. THE MOTIVATING FORCE BEHIND THE QURʾĀNIC USE OF *ʿ-l-m*

Insistence upon the importance of "knowledge" in a religious view of life may perhaps seem rather natural to us and something that requires no further comment. However, not much reflection is needed to show that the stress upon "knowledge" in a religious system is something rather unexpected and remarkable, and its presence begs for an explanation, if one can be provided. In the case of the Qurʾān, in particular, native Arabian stimuli by themselves could hardly have provoked a development such as we find

in the Qur'ān with respect to knowledge. It is true, as shown in the preceding chapter, that knowledge had come to represent a higher level of reality for pre-Islamic Arabs. But no matter how much we might strain our imagination to find a possible substitute for the missing evidence, we would hardly be justified in assuming that in pagan Arabia at least, knowledge was a concept that possessed religious urgency and was ready to play a prominent role in a new religious movement. Unless there existed some conception of knowledge in pre-Islamic Arabia beyond our purview, it is impossible to understand why Muḥammad should have given knowledge such a crucial position in his teaching. Thus, we are compelled to look for possible outside influences. To some, this might seem to bring up again the much discussed question of the Prophet's "originality." The contention that any search for extraneous models and inspiration diminishes the originality of his accomplishment and is, anyhow, unnecessary is as wrong as it is trite. In fact, if the Qur'ānic use of ʿl-m cannot be placed in a historical context—and pagan pre-Islamic Arabia by itself does not furnish such a context—it cannot but appear arbitrary and meaningless, and thus not truly original. True creative originality is found only where there is meaningful continuity. The "originality" of the Prophet's concern with knowledge will therefore be understood only if a likely source can be discovered.

In this connection, a highly suggestive passage is Qur'ān 102: 5–7/5–7: "Indeed, if you were to know *ʿilma l-yaqīni*, you would see Hell. Then, you would indeed see it *ʿayna l-yaqīni*." *ʿIlma l-yaqīni* may merely stand for an English adverbial construction, "certainly, with certainty."<sup>2</sup> However, taken by itself, the words may rather suggest the meaning of "the knowledge of certainty." This translation calls to mind an extremely influential concept of Christian theological speculation, *hê gnôsis tês alêtheias* "the knowledge of truth."<sup>3</sup> In Syriac translation, the Greek expression

<sup>2</sup> The adverbial construction in the form *ʿalima ʿilman yaqīnan* appears, for instance, in the poetry of Dhû r-Rummah as quoted by ash-Sharishî, *Sharḥ al-Maqāmât al-Harîrîyah*, I, 23 (Cairo 1306), cf. also C. H. H. Macartney's edition of Dhû r-Rummah's *Dîwân*, 667 (Cambridge 1919), where further references are given. It came to be used very widely, cf., for instance, Hunayn, in his translation of Galen, *Über die medizinischen Namen*, ed., trans. M. Meyerhof and J. Schacht, 16, l. 19 f. (Berlin 1931, *Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Kl.*).

<sup>3</sup> Cf., for instance, W. Jaeger, *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius*, 53, 76, 136, 176, etc. (Leiden 1954),

appears as *ida'tâ dashrârâ*. There can be no objection to the use of *ilm* here to translate Greek *gnôsis*. The differentiation in Arabic usage involving a distinct preference for employing the root *ʿ-r-f* for translating *gignôskô* and its derivatives<sup>4</sup> is traceable only in much later times. It cannot be expected to have made its appearance already in the Qur'anic period. Moreover, the Syriac phrase uses the root *y-d-ʿ*, which would undoubtedly be rendered by Arabic *ʿ-l-m*. This makes unconvincing any attempt to rule out *ilm* as a possible translation of *gnôsis*.

The use of *yaqîn* in the sense of "truth" could also by no means be considered objectionable. *Yaqîn* always serves to refer to knowledge at its most certain.<sup>5</sup> In the Qur'ân, *yaqîn* occurs twice paired with *ḥaqq* "truth" in a genitive construction (*ḥaqqu l-yaqîni*, 56:95/95 and 69:51/51). The exact interpretation of these passages has caused some difficulty to grammarians and Qur'ân interpreters. They vacillate mainly between two interpretations. *Ḥaqq al-yaqîn* either "truth (resulting) from certain (information)" or "truth (which is) certainty." The latter interpretation assumes identity of meaning for *ḥaqq* and *yaqîn*.<sup>6</sup> Be this as it may, *yaqîn* could very

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or H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, I, 14, and *passim* (on the understanding of *gnôsis* in early Christian theology) (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), The expression *da'at 'emet* of the Dead Sea Sectarians may also belong here, cf. W. D. Davies, 'Knowledge' in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in *Harvard Theological Review*, XLVI (1953), 119. The later Sûfî interpretation of *ilm al-yaqîn* comes again very close to the Gnostic understanding of *hê gnôsis tês alêtheias*. A late Ismâ'îlî author defines "faith" (*îmân*) as "the knowledge of the truth" (*ilm al-ḥaqîqah*), cf. Shihâb-ad-dîn al-Maynaqî, *Kitâb al-Îdâh*, ed. 'Ârif Tâmir, 8 f. (Beirut 1965).

<sup>4</sup> Thus, it is of no significance that in Graeco-Arabic translation literature, we find the Qur'anic *ilm al-yaqîn* used to render Greek *epistêmê*, while *gnôsis tês alêtheias* occurring right next to it appears in Arabic as *ma'rifat ḥaqîqat*. . . , cf. Nicomachus of Gerasa, *Arithmêtikê Eisagôgê*, 2, l. 2 Hoche, Arabic trans. by Thâbit b. Qurrah, ed. W. Kutsch, 11 (Beirut 1959). Cf. also 4, l. 10 Hoche = 13 Kutsch and below, p. 199. *Ma'rifat al-ḥaqq* occurs also in the commentary of *lymnos* on the *Isagoge*, as quoted by Abû l-Ḥasan b. Abî Dharr, *Kitâb as-Sa'âdah wa-l-is'âd*, ed. M. Minovi, 340 (Wiesbaden 1957-58).

<sup>5</sup> At a very early date, the meaning of "death" was attributed by many authorities to *yaqîn* in Qur'ân 15:99/99 and 74:47/48. Although there is hardly anything unusual in finding "certainty" used as a euphemism for "death," it seems more likely that this meaning is due to exegetes who felt that in the former passage, the ordinary meaning of *yaqîn* did not yield an acceptable sense. However, this is not really necessary. Another passage whose context also presents difficulties of interpretation contains an obviously parallel phrase in which *yaqîn* is replaced by *ilm* (10:93/93).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. at-Ṭabari, *Tafsîr*, XXVII, 110 f. (Cairo 1321); *Lisân al-'Arab*, I, 91, s. *rad. s-w*-. It may not be out of place here to mention that according to Antonius Melissa, in Migne.



well have been used as a suitable translation of *alêtheia/shrârâ*. There is no need to insist that only *ḥaqq* could have served this purpose.

In favor of understanding *ʿilma l-yaqîni* not as a rendering of “the knowledge of truth” but as an adverbial expression, it may be claimed that we have a parallelism between it and the following *ʿayna l-yaqîni*, which can mean only “(seeing) with the eye of certainty,” representing an adverbial construction. However, it is easily possible that the expression of “the knowledge of truth,” having once been adopted by Muḥammad as a phrase of religious import, suggested to him when he used it the seemingly parallel expression *ʿayna l-yaqîni* in the following sentence.

We cannot be absolutely certain that *hê gnôsis tês alêtheias* found its way into the Qur'ân through direct translation from, presumably, some Aramaic dialect. There is, however, one undeniable fact in support of such an assumption. The phrase was much used and discussed in Christian circles in the time of the Prophet and in a geographical location as close to central Arabia as we might hope to find for any literary evidence of this sort. Significantly, the evidence does not come from a strictly traditional Christian work but from a work of Christian gnosticism, the *Centuries* of the fourth-century Evagrius Ponticus. The *Centuries* are known to us through their Syriac translation(s) and through the commentary of Bâbây of Mount ʾÎzlâ who was a contemporary of Muḥammad.<sup>7</sup> *ʾÎdaʿtâ dashrârâ* occurs in the work numerous times, and the importance of the expression for the thought of both the author and the commentator is fully evident. Further works in Syriac attest to the central position occupied by *ʾîdaʿtâ*

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*Patrologia Graeca*, 136, 843 f., Chrysostomus defined truth as the certain insight into being (*alêtheia estin hê tou ontos asphalês katanoësis*).

<sup>7</sup> For Evagrius, cf. the fundamental work by A. Guillaumont, *Les ‘Kephalaia Gnostica’ d’Évagre le Pontique* (Paris 1962). Guillaumont has shown that the work has come down to us in two Syriac translations, the one published by W. Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus* (Göttingen 1912, *Abh. der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, philol.-hist. Kl., N. F.* 13, 2), and used by Bâbây, in which much of Evagrius’ unorthodox thought was eliminated, and another truer to the original Greek text, published by Guillaumont himself, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, 28, 1 (Paris 1958). Relevant passages are to be found in Frankenberg’s edition, 58, l. 8, 90/92, 114, l. 19, 190, l. 23. For Bâbây, cf. A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, 137–39 (Bonn 1922), as well as Guillaumont’s work.

For Joseph Ḥazzâyâ, cf. below, p. 210. n. 2.

“knowledge” in certain circles of Oriental Christianity. John the Hermit (John of Apameia) uses *īdaʿtā* as a fundamental term. His work is possibly to be dated in the first half of the sixth century, although this date and his authorship of some of the material published under his name are highly uncertain. In the words of its editor, *īdaʿtā* “is used to indicate an ability lodged in human nature. It is also used with reference to an ability that can be acquired by a life of resignation and, especially, quietude. And finally, it is used for the highest form of divine experience.”<sup>8</sup> Shemʿon dṬaybūteh, who lived in Islamic times, in the late seventh century, but before the existence of Islamic influence upon a man of his kind could be reasonably expected, also makes much of “knowledge” and of “the knowledge of the truth,” which is the light of the soul and is nourished by a sovereign free will and constant pious meditation. However, it must be admitted that for him, “knowledge” does not have as characteristic a function as it does for the other authors mentioned.<sup>9</sup> It may further be added here that there is an interesting text of an older date which, however, might have been well known to the Christians along the borders of Arabia in the time of the Prophet, the *Odes of Solomon*, which, as has been pointed out,<sup>10</sup> the root *y-d-ʿ* and its derivations are of much more frequent occurrence than the concept of faith (*h-y-m-n*).

The stress placed on knowledge in these works, and even the manner in which the concept is handled, forcibly recall the Qurʾānic treatment of *ʿilm*. It is a possible and by no means daring assumption that somewhat unorthodox Christian discussions in some form or other trickled down to Muḥammad and, sparking his interest in “knowledge,” set in motion the great movement toward *ʿilm* in Islam. This is a hypothesis, and it must remain one until further evidence is forthcoming, if this should ever be the case. However, it definitely helps us to understand the seeming discrepancy between the limited scope of pre-Islamic Arabian “knowledge” and the tremendous impact the concept undeniably made upon Muḥammad.

For the present, Christian gnostics, if they may thus be labeled,

<sup>8</sup> Cf. L. G. Rignell, *Drei Traktate von Johannes dem Einsiedler*, 18 (Lund 1960, *Lunds Universitets Årsskrift*, N. F. Åv. 1, 54:4).

<sup>9</sup> Ed. A. Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, VII, 48 f., text 307 (Cambridge 1934). Dāḍīshōʿ, *On Solitude*, *ibid.*, 114, remarks that “through the power of knowledge we know God and love the Creator and righteousness”.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. K. Rudolph, in *Revue de Qumran*, IV (1964), 525.

appear to have the first claim to a far-reaching historical role which they might have filled quite unknown to themselves. Normative Judaism takes little notice of “knowledge” in its preserved writings. It does not use the term in a way suggesting a comparison with the Qur’ān.<sup>11</sup> It should be stressed, though, that we know nothing precise about Jewish beliefs in the Arabia of the Prophet’s time and environment. Little can be made of the verses of a Jewish poet alleged to have been composed concerning an event of the year 624, the murder of Ka’b b. al-Ashraf, and presumed to have been spoken not much later than the following year:

I notice that he (Muḥammad) is disapproved by the rabbis all,  
Each of whom possesses knowledge and is well-informed,  
Who have been studying every (kind of) knowledge  
Spoken of by the Torah and the Psalter.

Far from being “unquestionably authentic,”<sup>12</sup> these verses must be considered of doubtful genuineness, even if they are quite old. Assuming that they were indeed composed at the date indicated, one would have to find in them an echo of Qur’ānic terminology rather than the source of it. On the other hand, attention may be called to the fact that scholars feel that the term “knowledge” (*da’at*) plays a significant role in the writings of the Dead Sea Sectarians. In fact, the Palestinian Psalmist whose composition has been recovered in Qumrān anticipated an important Islamic development when he sang, “Grant me a spirit of faith and knowledge” (*ṛūḥ ʿemūnâh w²-da’at ḥonnēnī*).<sup>13</sup> Therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility of the existence of a similar influence of gnostic ideas on Arabian Judaism as is found among certain Christians, and hence, the possibility of the influence of such hypothetical Jewish gnosticism on Muḥammad.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. also M. Lidzbarski, in *Zeitschrift für Semitistik*, I (1922), 93 f., who states that the use of *ʿilm* for theological knowledge is something peculiar to Islam and that “Hebrew *y-d-ʿ* by no means developed in this direction, although it made attempts to do so (Is. 11:2; Hosea 4:6).”

The fact that no less than sixty pages are needed to list all the occurrences of the root *y-d-ʿ* in the Babylonian Talmud would seem to be of no significance, cf. C. J. Kasowski, *Thesaurus Talmudis*, XVI, 130–90 (Jerusalem 1966).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. C. C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, 33 (New York 1933, reprint 1967). The source for the verses is Ibn Hishām, *Ṣīrah*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, 659 (Göttingen 1858–60).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. J. A. Sanders, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*, IV, 77, col. XIX.1. 14 (Oxford 1965). Cf. above, p. 23, n. 2, and M. Mansoor, in *Studies in the History of Religions (Supplement to Numen)*, XII (1967), 395 f. See below, chapter V, 2.

As with Judaism, so it is in this respect with pagan Gnosticism. Pagan Gnosticism, in some form or other, might have furnished the inspiration for Muḥammad's religious conception of "knowledge." Mandaeism at once comes to mind, although valid objections may be raised to referring to it as "pagan" gnosticism. The Mandaean religious writings speak constantly of *kushṭā* "truth." Mandaeism derives its very name from "knowledge" in the guise of *Manda dḤayye* "The Knowledge of Life." It has also been pointed out that "truth" and "life" were brought into intimate contact in the Gospel of St. John 14:6.<sup>14</sup> There would be nothing strange in encountering gnostic Mandaean influences in central Arabia. The possibility of such influences has indeed been hinted at tentatively in connection with a particular passage of the Qur'ān.<sup>15</sup> However, it is hardly possible as yet, although future discoveries may very well alter the situation, to make out a documented and convincing case for a substantial influence upon the Qur'ān from this direction. Thus, the gnostic Christian hypothesis would so far seem to point to the most likely source of inspiration for the Prophet's concept of knowledge.

### 3. HUMAN KNOWLEDGE AND DIVINE KNOWLEDGE

The constant repetition in the Qur'ān of the statement that God "knows" made a profound impact upon later Muslim theology. How Muḥammad conceived of such divine knowledge has been carefully studied by modern scholars.<sup>16</sup> How God's "knowledge," His omniscience, was to be understood in the larger context of theology, whether or not the process of knowing was of the same kind in God as in human beings, what a knowing God meant for human affairs—all this was discussed over and over by Muslim scholars. They also noted that certain other roots besides *ʿ-l-m* that expressed intellectual perception, in particular, *ʿ-r-f*, were inapplicable to God and were therefore not used in the Qur'ān in connection with Him.<sup>17</sup> It can hardly be assumed that Muḥammad

<sup>14</sup> Cf. R. Macuch, *Anfänge der Mandäer*, in F. Altheim and R. Stiehl (eds.), *Die Araber in der Alten Welt*, II, 107 (Berlin 1965).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. F. Rosenthal, *Nineteen*, in *Analecta Biblica*, XII (1959), 304–18.

<sup>16</sup> Cf., in particular, Daud Rahbar, *God of Justice*, 51–66, 261–322 (Leiden 1960). On the use of the root *ʿ-l-m* in Muḥammad's preaching, cf. J. Corbon, in *Mélanges de l'Université St. Joseph*, XXXVI (1959 [1961]), 188 f.

<sup>17</sup> R. Tietz, *Bedingungssatz und Bedingungs Ausdruck im Koran*, 94 (Diss. Tübingen 1963),

entertained notions about God's knowledge of the same kind as we find them expressed in later times or that he was fully aware of all the implications inherent in the speculation about divine knowledge. According to the Qur'ân, God's knowledge is undeniably superior in quantity to that of human beings. "God knows, and you do not know," the Qur'ân says frequently. But it is also somehow different in quality. God knows about secret matters, the knowledge of which escapes human beings, cf., for instance, Qur'ân 6:59/59 and also 11:31/33.

All human knowledge specifically comes from God. Thus, it is evident that human beings cannot know more than God (2:140/134). Even the angels know only what God has taught them (2:32/30). Nothing of the divine knowledge can be known except if God wills it (2:255/256). Much more important, however, is the obvious assumption throughout the Qur'ân that human knowledge, that is, true human knowledge, is to be equated with religious insight. In this connection, it is worthy of notice that *ilm* is supposed to have been possessed preferably by Biblical figures who succeeded in achieving knowledge of the true religion.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the prophets are in the possession of a knowledge coming to them from God such as ordinary human beings do not possess (7:62/60). But there are also numerous passages which show clearly that in Muḥammad's view, "knowledge" was to be equated with the divine revelation he himself, and his less successful predecessors among the Biblical prophets, had received. In a passage whose precise interpretation is not altogether certain, the Holy Book itself is described as "a book which We have set out according to knowledge" (7:52/50). Elsewhere, it is argued that faith follows upon knowledge, and the question is asked, how could anyone knowingly not believe? (3:71 ff./64 ff.). The equation of religious faith with knowledge finds its clearest indication in certain passages where the intended meaning is thrown into bold relief by the time-honored use of parallelism. *Ilm* and *imân* appear once paired in a set phrase, which usually employs only *ilm* (30:56/56). "Believing" and "being

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attempts rather interestingly to show that syntactic considerations in Qur'ân 2:197/193 and 3:29/29 suggest the meaning of "to learn, to take cognizance of" for *ʿ-l-m* where God is the subject. This goes against later theological ideas. It might have already been repugnant to Muḥammad's concept of the omniscience of God. Cf., however, below, pp. 113 ff.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. H. Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, 130, n. 1 (reprint Hildesheim 1961).

given knowledge” appear as parallel expressions in Qur’ân 58: 11/12: “God will lift up by degrees those among you who have come to believe and those who have been given knowledge.” Another Qur’ânic passage also implies in the same manner that knowledge is the necessary consequence of faith: “And those who have come to believe know..., whereas those who do not believe say...” (2:26/24). In the rhymed prose style of the Qur’ân, “those who believe” are paired with “those who have certain knowledge (*yûqinûn*)” of the other world (2:4/3). The most telling indications for the basic identity of knowledge and faith are to be found in passages where roots expressing various forms of intellectual perception are juxtaposed with the verb “to believe.” Thus, Qur’ân 6:97–99/ 97–99 describes everything in the world as having been created for the guidance of mankind, in these terms: “And we have set out signs for people who know (*ya’lamûn*)..., for people who understand (*yafqahûn*)..., for people who have come to believe (*yu’minûn*).” Less dramatically, the same idea is driven home in Qur’ân 45:3–6/ 2–5: “Signs for believers (*li-l-mu’minîn*)..., signs for people who have certain knowledge (*yûqinûn*)..., people who have understanding (*ya’qilûn*)..., and in what story after God and His signs will they believe (*yu’minûn*)?”

The accumulated evidence is striking and persuasive. Right from the start, the student of the Qur’ân finds himself confronted with the thought presented forcefully and inescapably that all human knowledge that has any real value and truly deserves to be called “knowledge” is religious knowledge. Moreover, it is not just vaguely some general religious information, but it is specifically identical with the contents of the divine message transmitted by the Prophet.

The Qur’ân does, of course, often refer to mundane knowledge possessed by human beings. Such knowledge, it seems, is considered acquired by means of three organs of the body, the eye, the ear, and the heart. This at least is the obvious interpretation of passages in which hearing, seeing, and “hearts” are mentioned together (32:9/8 and 67:23/23), and, in particular, of the Qur’ânic passage 17:36/38 which holds these three functions responsible for the absence of knowledge: “Do not go after that of which you have no knowledge, for hearing, sight, and heart, all these are held responsible.”

Furthermore, the vocabulary of the Qur’ân also reveals awareness

of the manifold shades of human intellectual perception by its use of practically all the relevant Arabic roots, such as  $\text{'l-m}$ ,  $d-r-y$ ,  $\text{'r-f}$ ,  $sh-\text{'r}$ ,  $\text{'q-l}$ ,  $y-q-n$ ,  $f-q-h$ ,  $f-k-r$ ,  $f-h-m$  (which occurs only once),  $z-n-n$ ,  $z-\text{'m}$ ,  $dh-k-r$ ,  $b-y-n$ ,  $d-r-s$ ,  $ba\text{'}s\text{'}r$   $bi-$ ,  $khab\text{'}r$   $bi-$ , and  $mu\text{'}h\text{'}t$   $bi-$ . The famous passage concerning the crucifixion of Jesus (4:157/156) catalogues in detail various degrees of cognition such as doubt (*shakk*), guessing (*ẓann*), knowledge (*ilm*), and certainty (*yaqīn*). In another passage, the Qur'ān speaks of knowledge, guessing, and conjecturing (*takhruṣūn*, 6:148/149). But not only do we find the existence of such gradations of knowledge attested in the Qur'ān. We are also told in a number of passages about the dialectical processes through which knowledge is acquired and sifted by human beings. The vocabulary used in this connection (*shāqqā*, *jādala* "to dispute," *hujjah*, *burhān* "argument, proof") shows considerable refinement and precision, if not in the later philosophical sense.

In the Prophet's view of the world, "knowledge" which in its totality is a matter of the deepest concern for him consists of two principal parts. There is human knowledge, that is, a secular human knowledge of an elementary or more advanced character and a religious human knowledge; the latter constitutes the highest development of knowledge attainable to man, and it is the kind of human knowledge usually meant in the Qur'ān where it preaches the importance of human knowledge. But in addition to human knowledge both secular and religious, there also exists a divine knowledge. It is basically identical with human knowledge, still, it is somehow of a higher order both quantitatively and qualitatively. The most important feature of these aspects of knowledge is that they are felt and represented by the Prophet as interlocking and interdependent. There can be no human knowledge secular or religious without the knowledge possessed by the deity. On the other hand, the reason for the existence of divine knowledge as well as its final destination are, in a manner of speaking, man and his need and desire for knowledge. Knowledge may be acquired by human action, but it would seem to be within the power of God to bestow it upon man in any degree and to any extent He chooses. The worth of knowledge and, indeed, the mere fact that something can be considered knowledge depend on the existence of a relationship between such knowledge and what is thought of as God's knowledge or as being in harmony with it. It is obviously

questionable whether anything else that human beings may wish to call knowledge is to be regarded as such. Whenever one speaks of human knowledge, he has to keep in mind the connection between such knowledge and the form of knowledge that is suitable only for the deity. Knowledge appears as something varied and immense, but it is in a sense finite and monolithic. Above all, however, knowledge remains the goal of all worthwhile aspirations of mankind, the true synonym of religion.

These were the ideas that determined the development of Muslim "knowledge" and with it, of all Muslim intellectual life and, in fact, all Muslim religious and political life. From the Qur'anic attitude toward knowledge, it would be possible almost to predict the course that Muslim theology, mysticism, jurisprudence and the like were to take, as well as the fate that had to befall the liberating influences set in motion by the reception of the Classical heritage in the ninth century. The triumphs and defeats of Muslim civilization are foreshadowed in Muḥammad's understanding of "knowledge."

#### 4. *Jāhiliyyah*

The term *jāhiliyyah* occurs in the Qur'ān four times.<sup>19</sup> The way it is used is another indication that in the mind of the Prophet, unawareness of or opposition to his message was equivalent to "ignorance" as being the opposite of knowledge and religion. Goldziher's much discussed suggestion that the root *j-h-l* was, with reference to *jāhiliyyah*, to be understood as the opposite of *ḥilm* "kindness" (or the like) and that it denoted "barbarity" rather than ignorance<sup>20</sup> is of doubtful validity as such. It certainly

<sup>19</sup> (3:154/148) "A group of you... thinking (*ẓann*) about God what is not true in the way of *al-jāhiliyyah*."

(5:50/55) "Is it the judgment (*ḥukm*) of *al-jāhiliyyah* they desire? But who is better than God in judgment..."

(33:33/33) "(O wives of the Prophet)...do not swagger about in the manner of *al-jāhiliyyah al-ūlā*."

(48:26/26) "Since those who did not believe put into their hearts fierceness, the fierceness of *al-jāhiliyyah*, God thereupon sent down His *sakīnah* upon His Prophet and the believers..."

<sup>20</sup> Cf. I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, I, 219–28 (Halle 1889), English trans. by C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern, 201–8 (London 1967). The religious connotation of the use of the root *j-h-l* has been well brought out by Toshiko Izutsu, *The Structure of the*



does not apply to the meaning the Prophet himself found in *jâhiliyyah*. But what is the original, precise significance of the word?

The main problem lies in the strange type of word formation represented by *jâhiliyyah*. Genuine abstract noun formations ending in *-îyah* are rare in the Qur'ân, nor would one expect to find them there. Another clear example, *rahbânîyah* "monasticism," obviously originated under foreign influence.<sup>21</sup> An abstract noun formation ending in *-îyah* on the basis of an Arabic participle, supposedly coined by Muḥammad himself, seems particularly strange, so strange indeed as to invite disbelief in its possibility. As a matter of fact, although there is at least one clear instance in the old *ḥadîth* where *jâhiliyyah* denotes an abstract quality ("you are a man in which there is *jâhiliyyah*"),<sup>22</sup> the passages of the Qur'ân seen as they are and not through the eyes of traditional interpretation do not require an abstract meaning for the term. *Jâhiliyyah* here might be considered a collective plural of *jâhil* "ignorant (person)." A corresponding formation would, for instance, be *hurriyyah* explained, in a verse by Dhû r-Rummah, as "nobles,"<sup>23</sup> A similar formation may be posited for *dhurriyyah* "progeny," although it must be admitted that the etymology of this word is quite uncertain (and the Arabic root *dh-r-r* "to sprinkle" parallels the root *dh-r-y*). In support of the interpretation of *jâhiliyyah* as a collective plural, it should be noted that in all its occurrences in the Qur'ân, *jâhiliyyah* is used next to pluralic forms referring to people. There is nothing to indicate in the Qur'ânic passages that *jâhiliyyah* signifies some such concept as a definite "period of ignorance" or a well-defined "paganism."<sup>24</sup> All they say is that there is or was *al-jâhiliyyah*, meaning, perhaps, "ignorant persons" who spoke and acted contrary to what Muḥammad considered the right way of thinking and behavior. Only the use of the adjective *al-ûlâ* "first" in 33:33/33 could give us pause. Intended as a

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*Ethical Terms in the Koran*, 24 ff. (Tokyo 1959) (revised edition, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ân*, 28 ff. [Montreal 1966]). Izutsu's interpretation of *jâhiliyyah* depends, however, too much on accepted traditional ideas concerning the term. For the unusual character of the *-îyah* formation, cf. also T. Nöldeke, F. Schwally, and others, *Geschichte des Qorâns*, I, 242 (Leipzig 1909–38).

<sup>21</sup> But cf. J. Horowitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 64 (Berlin and Leipzig 1926).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. A. J. Wensinck and others, *Concordance et Indices de la tradition musulmane*, I, 394a (Leiden 1936–).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. F. Rosenthal, *The Muslim Concept of Freedom*, 9 (Leiden 1960).

<sup>24</sup> It is hardly necessary to point out that the use of the Arabic definite article *al-* need not indicate specific determination. It would seem to signify here generic determination.

numeral, *al-ûlâ* might suggest the existence of a sharply defined first group (or period) of *jâhiliyyah* which was followed by a second (and, possibly, a third, etc.) one. The Qur'ân interpreters have, in fact, understood *al-ûlâ* in this manner and have tried to fix the actual dates of the first and second *jâhiliyyahs* in terms of the history of the Jewish-Christian prophets. However, *al-ûlâ* may as well be understood as "first" in the general sense of "from early times," as is often the case in the Qur'ân. This seems to be the more likely interpretation. It would define *al-jâhiliyyah al-ûlâ* rather noncommittally as "previous *jâhiliyyah*" (where *jâhiliyyah* could be "ignorant persons"). It suggests, however, the placing of *al-jâhiliyyah* into a more remote past than is required by the context of the other three passages.

The preceding discussion makes it extremely unlikely that the term *jâhiliyyah* owes its origin to an attempted loan translation of a concept such as the *agnoia* of Acts 17:30.<sup>25</sup> Some notion akin to *agnoia* was no doubt in the mind of Muḥammad when he used the word, and the later understanding of *jâhiliyyah* is in agreement with the sentiment expressed in the passage of the New Testament. But *agnoia* would hardly have appeared in Arabic in such a peculiar type of noun formation. *Jahl* or the like would have been used.

*Jâhiliyyah*, it seems, was readily acceptable and understandable to the Prophet's contemporaries as a collective plural. Even so, it appears to have been used by the Prophet with peculiar forcefulness. This would suggest that some more specific and meaningful connotation was concealed behind the term. Such special significance might have accrued to the term through its connection with the famous Jewish concept of *gālūt*, *gālūtâ* "exile, diaspora."<sup>26</sup> *Jâhiliyyah* may represent the Jewish word assimilated by the Prophet to the common Arabic root *j-h-l*. This need not have occurred very early in his career, nor must it have taken place at any definable juncture of his life, since employment of the widely known Jewish

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 61 f.

<sup>26</sup> Later Jewish scholars, among them Maimonides, did not forego the temptation of connecting *jâhiliyyah* with *gālūt*. This in no way confirms the theory suggested here, nor does it justify increased scepticism with regard to it as may flow from the realization that medieval scholars, even the greatest among them, were fancifully perverse in nearly all their etymological speculations.

For the term *gālūt* as a possible influence on the Qur'anic transformation of Goliath into Jālūt, cf. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 106, and A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ân*, 97 f. (Baroda 1938).

term in the way suggested does not necessarily presuppose any friendly or intimate contact with Jews. The affinity between *gālūt* as conceived by the Jews and *jāhiliyyah* as it was possibly understood by Muḥammad is readily observable. In the *Mishnāh*, *Āḥōt* V, 9, it is stated that “exile” comes into the world as a result of idolatry, unchastity (incest), and bloodshed. It is a punishment for these sins. On the other hand, these sins are not wiped out and nullified by “exile.” “Exile” remains a situation in which they continue to flourish and from which, it seems, the land itself may have to suffer because of the sins of its inhabitants.<sup>27</sup> Thus, *gālūt* stands for the very qualities of savagery, immorality, and ignorance of the true God that Muḥammad finds objectionable in the *jāhiliyyah*. Some specific detail to be found in Qur’ān 48:26/26 further suggests a connection between *gālūt* and *jāhiliyyah*. This is the occurrence in this passage of the loan word *sakīnah*. The *sakīnah* is said to have been sent down by God to Muḥammad and the believers to put an end to the “fierceness of *al-jāhiliyyah*.” It so happens that in Jewish literature, the *sh’kīnāh* is also mentioned in connection with the sins of the “exile.” As long as Israel practices those sins, the *sh’kīnāh* is said to keep away from the Jews.<sup>28</sup> This agreement in detail seems striking, but in view of the frequency with which the term *sh’kīnāh* is employed in Judaism, its use in connection with both *gālūt* and *jāhiliyyah* may be due to coincidence, and not too much should be made of it. However, all the difficulties surrounding the Qur’ānic usage of *jāhiliyyah* would disappear, and a new dimension be added to the word, if it can be considered as having been formed by Muḥammad through a process of mentally and verbally adapting the Jewish concept of “exile” with its sinful, godless behavior to the “ignorance” of those ignorant men who did not acknowledge and believe in his message.

## 5. WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

The outstanding position accorded to *ilm* in the Qur’ān led to the practical elimination of *ḥikmah* “wisdom” as something superior to knowledge and, indeed, as a serious rival of it. In the Judaeo-Christian Oriental tradition, a distinction between “wisdom”

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Sifṛā* 86c, on Leviticus 18:28. I owe this reference to Judah Goldin.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Āḥōt dRabbī Nāṭān*, trans. J. Goldin, 160 f. (New Haven 1955, *Yale Judaica Series* 10).

and “knowledge” that gave preference to the former is clearly indicated. Syrian Christian philosophers defined “knowledge as the exact understanding of things through cognitive discernment,” whereas “wisdom was the good administration of knowledge.” Consequently, they said, “every wisdom is at the same time knowledge, but not every knowledge is at the same time wisdom.”<sup>29</sup> In the West, the distinction between “wisdom” and “knowledge” is in part a Semitic heritage, but it also gained much from the linguistic situation in Greek and Latin, both of which possessed two distinct words rivaling for greater recognition (*sophia-epistémê* and *sapientia-scientia*). Christian theology gave further impetus to putting “wisdom” on a pedestal high above “knowledge” where it has remained to our days, celebrated in innumerable disquisitions poetry and prose. It was Augustine who took Cicero’s definition of “wisdom” as “the knowledge of things human and divine (and their causes)”<sup>30</sup> and proposed the thesis that “wisdom is properly called the knowledge of things divine, whereas the term ‘knowledge’ is properly applied to the knowledge of things human.”<sup>31</sup> In God, however, there exists no distinction between “wisdom” and

<sup>29</sup> Cf. G. Furlani, “*Il Libro delle Definizioni e Divisioni*” di Michele l’Interprete, 70, 121, and, for parallel texts, 178 (Rome 1926, *Atti della R. Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Memorie, Cl. sc. mor., stor. e filol.* 6, 2).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes*, IV, 26, 57, and *De officiis*, I, 2, 5. A Greek version attributed to Basilus reads, *Sophia esti epistémê theiôn kai anthrôpinôn pragmatôn kai tôn toutois aitiôn*, cf. Antonius Melissa, 797 f. See also al-Fârâbî, *Aphorisms of the Statesman*, ed., trans. D. M. Dunlop, 34 (Cambridge 1961). “Wisdom is the knowledge of remote causes...”

*Sophia* “wisdom” was replaced by *falsafah* “philosophy” in the beginning of the Arabic translation of Pseudo-Plutarch’s *Placita*. Muslims thus knew “the knowledge of things divine and human” as the Stoic definition of philosophy, cf. H. Daiber, *Die arabische Übersetzung der Placita Philosophorum*, 123 f., 508 ff. (Saarbrücken 1968, doctoral dissertation). Cf. also Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, ed. Q. Zurayq, 18 (Beirut 1966).

From the point of view of later Muslim developments, it is, however, not without interest to observe that Neo-Pythagoreanism in the person of Archytas considered “knowledge” (*epistēmā*) the comprehensive term which included the “wisdom” (*sophia*) of matters divine and the “understanding” (*phronāsis*) of human and material things. The virtues depending upon reason and proof must be called “sciences” (*epistēmā* in the plural). Cf. Stobaeus, *Florilegium*, ed. C. Wachsmuth and O. Hense, III, 63 (1884–1912, reprint Berlin 1958).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. St. Augustine, *De trinitate*, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 42, 1037 (Book 14, ch. 1, 3), as discussed by E. F. Rice Jr., *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom*, 4 (Cambridge, Mass., 1958). For instructive passages on later ideas concerning *sapientia* in the West, cf. Rice, 14 f., 78, 93, 103 f., 110, 163.

“knowledge.”<sup>32</sup> For human beings, “wisdom” is something better than “knowledge.” It embodies a higher degree of knowledge and insight in the realm of both human perceptions and theological speculation.

In Islam, any distinction of this sort that might have been quite generally felt to be inherent in wisdom was effectively precluded by the great dignity reserved in the Qur’ân for the concept of “knowledge.” It probably was on account of the great weight the term *ilm* carried in Arabic that Greek *sophia* was at times translated not by *ḥikmah* but by *ilm*. This happened in the case of a passage of the New Testament possessing great theological significance. The designation of Christ as “the power of God and the wisdom of God” in 1 Cor. 1:24 resulted in an Arabic translation speaking of *qudrah* and *ilm*. This suggested to Muslim theologians the problem of the essential attributes of God as they had become accustomed to consider them.<sup>33</sup> *Hikmah* was in a way a neutral and colorless term, and its use here would have been almost meaningless for them.

Another factor was operative in assigning “wisdom” a backseat to “knowledge.” The root *ḥ-k-m*, which in other Semitic languages had long ago come to convey the idea of “wisdom,” expresses juridical and administrative/political activity in Arabic. It has been correctly suggested that *ḥikmah* “wisdom,” *ḥakīm* “wise,” and any derivation from the root that seems to imply “wisdom” owe their existence to foreign influence.<sup>34</sup> One-half of the passages in which *ḥikmah* occurs in the Qur’ân mention the word in connection with “the book.” Thus, they obviously attribute to *ḥikmah* some specific, if not clearly defined, religious meaning within the framework of the divine revelation. There is some logic, although it is of the fanciful variety, in the approach of ash-Shâfi’î who on the

<sup>32</sup> Cf. St. Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 40, 140 (Book 2, chs. 2, 3), quoted by D. Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre*, 27, n. 55 (Gotha 1877).

For ‘Isâ b. Zur’ah, “knowledge” is subsumed under “wisdom.” Therefore, among the three attributes of God (*jawād*, *ḥakīm*, and *qādir*), *ḥakīm* also takes care of *‘ālim*, cf. P. Sbath, *Vingt traités*, 12 (Cairo 1929).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Fīṣal*, I, 51 (Cairo 1317–21). I have no way of knowing how the various Christian Arabic translations handled the passage. In the Roman edition of 1671, however, *qūwah* and *ḥikmah* are used. See below, pp. 122 f.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Horowitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 72 f., and Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, III.

basis of these passages interprets *ḥikmah* as the *sunna* of the Prophet.<sup>35</sup> The Qur'anic pairing of *ḥikmah* with *kitāb* "book" forces us to assume that in the other passages where the place of *ḥikmah* is taken by *ḥukm* (3:79/73, 6:89/89, 45:16/15), *ḥukm* was intended to have the same meaning as *ḥikmah*. Yet, the *ḥukm* which according to the Qur'ân was given to the prophets might have been conceived rather as worldly authority, regardless of the fact that it also occurs paired with *ilm* (12:22/22, etc.). The "wisdom" of man—and of God to whom the attribute *ḥakīm* is often applied—was certainly something highly significant in the religious view of the world held by the Prophet. However, since the original Arabic root meaning of *ḥ-k-m* suggested a different range of notions and since *ḥikmah/ḥukm* in certain combinations appears to have been restricted to some specific meanings, *ḥikmah/ḥukm* never attained a position where it might have had to compete seriously with the much more firmly entrenched *ilm* for a leading role in the Qur'ân and in later Islam. Actually, *ḥikmah* and *ilm* became mere synonyms for most Muslims.<sup>36</sup> If a distinction was made, *ḥikmah* usually came after *ilm*. This is well exemplified by a passage from the *Kitāb al-Huḥūq* of al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī who declares that "God brought forth knowledge (*ilm*) in the beginning. From knowledge He brought forth wisdom (*ḥikmah*). From wisdom He brought forth justice (*ʿadl*) and truth (*ḥaqq*), etc."<sup>37</sup> It would seem that it was in this sense that the Ṣūfī, al-Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ (d. 187/803), expressed the view that scholars were numerous, but of sages there were few, and he considered it more appropriate to call the sages, rather than the scholars, the heirs of the prophets.<sup>38</sup>

Naturally, the meaning of *ḥikmah* and its relationship to *ilm* were often discussed. Ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahânî expressed a very

<sup>35</sup> Cf. ash-Shâfiʿi, *Risālah*, 32 (Cairo 1358/1940), trans. M. Khadduri, 75 (Baltimore 1961); J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, 16 (Oxford 1950), quoting ash-Shâfiʿi's *Kitāb Jimāʿ al-ilm* which is included in the *Kitāb al-Umm*, VII, 251 (Cairo 1326).

<sup>36</sup> Cf., for instance, ar-Râzī, *aṭ-Ṭibb ar-rūḥānī*, in *Opera Philosophica*, ed. P. Kraus, 43 (Cairo 1939). This is all the more remarkable as ar-Râzī was a staunch advocate of philosophy.

<sup>37</sup> Ms. Ismail Saib I, 1571, fol. 181a, in Ankara. I am obliged to N. Heer for letting me use a microfilm of the manuscript which he had obtained from A. J. Arberry.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, VIII, 92 (Cairo 1351–57, reprint Beirut 1387/1967). For another Ṣūfī statement preferring *ḥikmah* to *ilm*, cf. Abū Nuʿaym, X, 122. Cf. also below, p. 180, n. 1.

widely held notion when he considered the term *ḥikmah* more appropriate to practical knowledge than theoretical knowledge and more used for action than for knowledge (with the reservation that effective action always requires previous knowledge). The subordinate position of *ḥikmah* after *ʿilm* and *ʿaql* is further indicated by the author's definition of *ḥikmah* as "hitting upon the truth by means of knowledge and intelligence." According to him, *ḥikmah* on the part of God is God's knowledge about (*maʿrifah*)<sup>39</sup> matters and their most effective creation. On the part of human beings, it is knowledge about existing things and doing what is good. Or, as he states in another passage, *ḥikmah* on the part of God is the manifestation of all bounties in the realm of the *intelligibilia* as well as the realm of the *sensibilia* (*iḡhār al-fadāʾil al-maʿqūlah wa-l-maḥsūṣah*). On the part of man, it is his recognition (*maʿrifah*) of that as much as is humanly possible.<sup>40</sup> Whatever it is, the position of *ḥikmah* is noticeably inferior here to that generally attributed to *ʿilm*. However, it should not be forgotten that the true ethical behavior in Islam was represented by the combination of knowledge and action.<sup>41</sup> In this context, wisdom was, it seems, occasionally valued more highly than knowledge. For the Ṣūfī Yūsuf ar-Rāzī (d. 304/916–17), "education (*adab*) makes possible the understanding of knowledge, knowledge provides for correct action, action secures wisdom," and from there on, the individual can steadily progress through asceticism to the grace of God.<sup>42</sup> For the tenth-century Ismāʿīlī, Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī, the wise man is the one who combines knowledge and action.<sup>43</sup> In the preceding century, the philosopher al-Kindī had defined wisdom as "the excellence of the (rational) power, the knowledge of the universals in their realities, and the employment (in action) of the realities that must be employed."<sup>44</sup> All these attempts to give "wisdom"

<sup>39</sup> The root *ʿ-r-f* is *stricto sensu* not applicable to God, as ar-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī himself states elsewhere, cf. below, p. 114, n. 2, but also p. 113.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. ar-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt*, I, 276, s. *rad. ḥ-k-m*, and the same author's *Tafsīr*, as quoted on fol. 1a of the Istanbul Ms. Carullah 2080, which was written in Konya in 791/1389.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Below, pp. 246 ff.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt aṣ-Ṣūfiyyah*, ed. N. Shuraybah (Sharībah?) 18 (Cairo 1953).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī, *Ḍiḥān*, II, 104.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. al-Kindī, *Fī ḥudūd al-ashyān*, in *Rasāʾil al-Kindī*, ed. M. ʿAbd-al-Hādī Abū Rīdah, I, 177 (Cairo 1369–72/1950–53); A. Altmann and S. M. Stern, *Isaac Israeli*, 31–35 (Oxford University Press 1958). For divine "wisdom" as implying the combination of knowledge and action, cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Maqāṣid*, II, 86 f. (Cairo 1355/1936).



a preponderant position in the ethical realm, even though they were repeated from time to time, remained muted vis-à-vis the constantly growing resonance of the term "knowledge."

Philosophy played a certain role in these statements stressing the importance of "wisdom." However, philosophy also turned out to be one of the factors that contributed to the further restriction of the general importance of "wisdom" in Islam, if in a more ambivalent manner. *Hikmah* was chosen to become the Arabic equivalent of Greek "philosophy." As such, and in its additional role as a term to translate Greek *sophia*, *hikmah* was enabled to share to some degree in the glory which surrounded "wisdom" customarily in the West. "Wisdom is the beginning of the sciences," young Aristotle is supposed to have said. In the same breath, however, he also proclaims that "Knowledge is the gift of the Creator; and wisdom His present," making no distinction between knowledge and wisdom.<sup>45</sup> In the verses of Ibn Sînâ:

The soul is like a glass lamp, and knowledge  
Is light (-giving fire), and the wisdom of God is the oil.  
If it is lit, you are alive,  
And if it is darkened, you are dead,<sup>46</sup>

the position of "the wisdom of God" is in no way superior to "knowledge." Presumably, it must be interpreted as divine inspiration being the equivalent of acquired knowledge. In any case, no matter how meaningful the term *hikmah* "philosophy" was for Muslim philosophers, its use in this special sense implied another restriction in meaning as compared to *ilm* which by that time was anyhow firmly entrenched as the dominant concept. The use of *hikmah* to designate philosophy made the fate of the term also greatly dependent on that of philosophy in Islam. It even became a term of opprobrium in the eyes of those who were strongly opposed to what they considered philosophy. On the other hand, the philosophers in turn were not able or willing to retaliate by putting any strictures on their part on the use of *ilm*. Thus, *ilm* was never placed in a position where it had to defend against *hikmah* the preeminence bestowed upon it by the Qur'ân.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, *Mukhtâr al-hikam*, ed. 'Abd-ar-Raḥmân Badawî, 199 (Madrid 1958).

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in G. C. Anawati, *Essai de bibliographie Avicennienne*, 121 (Cairo 1950).



### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE PLURAL OF KNOWLEDGE

*ʿUlûm*, the accepted plural of *ʿilm*, does not occur in the Qurʾân or in the old traditions of the Prophet. No passage in pre-Islamic poetry where the plural *ʿulûm* occurs can be cited. This is negative evidence. It does not suffice to prove that *ʿulûm* was not in use originally and that it constitutes a neologism of early Islamic, but otherwise uncertain, date. However, the possibility exists that this was actually the case. Until further evidence is forthcoming, such an assumption would seem to be rather probable. Modern English “knowledge” does not normally admit of a plural formation. However, the word was used in the plural in times past.<sup>1</sup> Correspondingly, *ʿulûm* might have once existed but then lain dormant until it gained wide currency in Islamic times. Thus, if any early instances of the use of *ʿulûm* should ever show up, the situation as it exists in English may serve as a kind of analogy that could help to make it clear that the mere occurrence of the formation does not invalidate the conclusions presented in this chapter.

Greek and Latin simply formed a plural for the respective abstract notions in these languages indicating “knowledge,” in order to obtain a general designation for the diverse concrete forms knowledge might take. In modern English, “knowledge” was retained to express the overall abstract concept, whereas other terms came to be employed for the general designation of “sciences” and “disciplines.” This was the result of the peculiar history of the English language. It is more in the nature of a special case, rare if not unique in its kind.

Arabic possesses a comprehensive abstract notion of “knowledge” (*ʿilm*), as we have seen. At first, it was used without any thought of classifiable variety in the sense of later specialized scholarship.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, V, 148b (Oxford 1933, 1961). “Those ingenuous knowledges” appears in 1627 in E. Bolton’s *The Cabanet Royal*, cf. T. H. Blackburn, in *Studies in the Renaissance*, XIV (1967), 168. For the general problem, cf. also B. Halpern, “Myth” and “Ideology” in *Modern Usage*, in *History and Theory*, I (1961), 130, n. 3: “In contrast [to opinion and theory], ‘knowledge’ is not used at all in the plural. Thus, it refers essentially to an isolated (abstract) relationship of a subject and an object, and is never used for plural or alternative relationships of subjects and objects.”

Among the Prophetic traditions, we find some instances of *ʿilm* being used without the definite article in contexts suggesting that some individual knowledge, and not the totality of knowledge, is meant. Thus, we have, for instance, traditions such as these: “He who is asked about a knowledge but keeps it concealed . . .,” or: “He who follows a path seeking there a knowledge . . .”<sup>2</sup> A chapter heading at the beginning of al-Bukhârî’s *Ṣaḥîḥ* reading, “He who is asked for a knowledge . . .,” clearly refers to inquiries about individual points concerning religious matters. However, there is always a great discrepancy between the constant appearance of *ʿilm* in al-Bukhârî’s chapter headings and the almost complete absence of it in the words put into the mouth of the Prophet.<sup>3</sup> Whatever significance may be ascribed here to the use of *ʿilm* as specialized knowledge, we are not justified in assuming that we are dealing with a usage dating from the time of the Prophet.

The use of *ʿilm* as a specialized discipline appears to be attested in a verse of Kuthayyir ‘Azzah (d. 105/723):

I went to the Banû Lihb seeking *al-ʿilm* with them,  
Since the *ʿilm* of those who practice augury has been entrusted to them.<sup>4</sup>

Here it looks as if augury is designated as a separate discipline within the general domain of knowledge. Unfortunately, however, there exists another version of the verse which does not contain the crucial second *ʿilm* but replaces it with a reference to “the augury of those who know.” This shows once more how little trust can be placed in the evidence Arabic poems furnish for the

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Abû Dâwûd, *Sunan*, III, 234–41 (Cairo 1310, in the margin of az-Zurqânî, *Sharḥ al-Muwattaʿ*), and at-Tirmidhî (with the *Commentary* of Ibn al-ʿArabî), *Ṣaḥîḥ*, X, 118, 115 (Cairo 1353/1934).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. below, p. 83.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Kuthayyir ‘Azzah, *Diwân*, ed. H. Pérès, I, 214 (Algiers and Paris 1928), from Abû l-Faraj al-Isfahânî, *Kitâb al-Aghânî*, VIII, 39 f. (Bûlâq 1285). For the other version, see al-Mubarrad, *Kâmil*, ed. W. Wright, 84 (Leipzig 1864).

Generally, *ʿilm* does not mean “specialized concrete discipline” in early poetry, even where something of the sort might be suspected at first glance. Cf., for instance, the verses (which, moreover, are certainly not genuine) cited in al-Yamanî, *Muḍâḥāt amthâl Kitâb Kalilah wa-Dimnah*, ed. M. Y. Najm, 76 (Beirut 1961): “. . . as the possessor of knowledge knows the (Qurʾân) interpretation (*ka-mâ ʿalima t-taʾwîla dhû l-ʿilmi*),” or *ibid.*, 86: “. . . the knowledge of the information in the possession of the informed person (*ʿilma akhbâri l-khabîri*).”

usage of individual words, quite apart from questions of genuineness and date.

At present, we are unable to determine the point in history when *ilm*, the concrete, specialized discipline of learning, with its plural *ulûm*, took its place in Islamic terminology next to *ilm*, the abstract concept. We can only speculate that this must have been quite early. It would, indeed, seem likely that at the beginning, there was the idea of "an *ilm*" constituting a distinctive part of the vast realm of religion conceived as knowledge and concerning individual points of religious law or theology and that this meant the starting point for the use of *ilm* as the designation for science or scholarly discipline. As always when we are dealing with the formative stages of Muslim civilization after the Qur'ân, neat chronological sequences cannot be established. Elements of all the later strains, such as theological theory, mystical speculation, Greek philosophical thought, and educational method, were ready to infiltrate Islam as soon as contact with areas more deeply steeped in contemporary civilization was made, if they had not been present already in the central Arabian home of Islam. A certain general acquaintance with the basic forms of intellectual life prevalent in the conquered territories could not have failed to make its presence felt almost immediately after the Muslim Conquest. There must have been an awareness of the fact that "knowledge" existed in a number of separate disciplines, that there was not only one *ilm* but a number of *ulûm*.

*Ilm* thus assumed another dimension in addition to the two that were indicated by the prehistory of the term and by the role it played in the thinking of the Prophet. *Ilm* can be some individual item of information, or a totality made up of a number of items of information. The plural *ulûm* did, in fact, serve later on occasionally to express also the plurality of a number of things known (*ma'lûm, ma'lûmât*) in the language of philosophy and speculative theology. It is also in this sense that, for instance, Ibn 'Arabî, in his *Futûhât*, speaks of an infinite number of *ulûm*. *Ilm* can be the absolute totality of all that can be known and can be done and is worth being known and being done. And, as we see, now, *ilm* can be one of the numerous sections of total knowledge that admit of systematic organization in the form of scientific disciplines.

All three dimensions of knowledge continued to live on independently and in a kind of interplay which determined the essence and

forms of Muslim civilization. The notion of knowledge as the sum of individual items loosely strung together re-appeared later on in Islam and showed itself in the preference accorded to a disjunctive juxtaposition of individual data as against a continuous and integrated exposition.<sup>5</sup> It can also be assumed to have contributed to the growing tendency of constantly adding to the number of what was considered to constitute independent scientific disciplines, until they reached the number of 150, or even 316, according to the classification of the sixteenth-century Ṭāshköprüzâdeh.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the notion of one indivisible knowledge raised the question whether the individual disciplines could in fact claim individual lives of their own or whether they were in no way essentially different from “knowledge” as a whole. The second alternative ultimately won out, favored as it was by philosophical considerations no less than by the Qur’ānic equation of knowledge with faith and religion. Essentially, all the sciences and all the crafts do not differ greatly from each other; their apparent differences concern only details and fine points.<sup>7</sup> The attitude underlying this view may be turned into a plea for an intensive, non-discriminatory cultivation of all recognized branches of learning. All *‘ulûm* must be considered interdependent. Therefore, it would be foolish to cultivate one and neglect the others, for the purpose of all of them alike is man’s salvation.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, as a result of the general trend toward considering “knowledge” as one with Islam, all *‘ulûm* tended to become one particular *‘ilm* representing both the totality of knowledge and its systematization. The preferred *‘ilm* to serve this purpose was the *‘ilm* “that was inherited from the Prophet.” Everything else is either useless or not an *‘ilm* at all, even if it is called by that name.<sup>9</sup> Other disciplines might claim to be *the ‘ilm*, but the identification of the totality and specificity of “knowledge” with religious knowledge was predominant.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. above, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ṭāshköprüzâdeh, *Miftâh as-sa‘âdah*, I, 68 f. (Hyderabad 1328–56), who also lists the fantastic claims made for the number of *‘ulûm* of Qur’ân interpretation.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the introduction of az-Zamakhsharî, *Kashshâf*, I, 10–12.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Risâlat Marâlib al-‘ulûm*, in *Rasâ’il Ibn Hazm*, ed. I. R. ‘Abbâs, 80 (Cairo, n. y. [1954]).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Ibn Taymiyah, as quoted by I. Goldziher, *Stellung der alten islamischen Orthodoxie zu den antiken Wissenschaften*, 6 (Berlin 1916, *Abh. Der Kgl. Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philos.-hist. Kl.* 1915, 8).

The radically opposite view that religious writings should not be considered “knowledge” and that this word should be reserved for the works of secular scholarship could hardly be expected to make any headway in later Islam. Remarkably enough, however, there is a passage in al-Jāḥiẓ that comes quite close to making this point. It was suggested to al-Jāḥiẓ that the willingness of the Manichaeans to spend a great amount of money on the luxurious production of their books indicated a veneration for knowledge. Al-Jāḥiẓ denied this. Since the Manichaean books deal with their religion, spending money on them is comparable to the Christians spending money on their churches and on crosses of gold, to the Zoroastrians spending money on their fire temples, and to the Indians spending money on the guardians of their Buddha statues. It would be different, if the Manichaeans were concerned with knowledge and philosophy and were spending their efforts on works of philosophy and logic<sup>10</sup> or on works dealing with the crafts, commerce, technology, or educational literature. Then one could speak of a veneration for “knowledge.”<sup>11</sup> Al-Jāḥiẓ would have vehemently repudiated any suggestion that his strictures applied with equal force to Muslim religious writings. He had no doubt to admit that they constituted true knowledge. Yet, it looks as if in his innermost heart, he did indeed feel that religious knowledge was basically different from secular knowledge and that only the latter was deserving of the name. Such an attitude was destined not to survive by much the time of al-Jāḥiẓ.

In given passages of Muslim literature, it is often difficult to be certain whether the use of the term *‘ilm* is meant to refer to knowledge both secular and religious, or only to the latter kind. It is also often difficult to decide whether *‘ilm* is meant to denote abstract “knowledge” or the singular of *‘ulūm*, the individual discipline. In the Muslim mind, these distinctions rarely if ever loomed as important as they do in our own way of thinking. This by itself is a characteristic aspect of the Muslim concept of *‘ilm* in general and of the Muslim approach to its plural in which abstract knowledge finds its concrete expression.

<sup>10</sup> The following three words are not quite clear, perhaps, “laws and rhetoric”(?).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. al-Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, I, 28 f. (Cairo 1323–25) = I, 55 f. (Cairo 1356/1958). This was the time when al-Kindī could write a work on what is expressly qualified as *human* knowledge (*Aqsām al-‘ilm al-insī*).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DEFINITIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

In accordance with the ancient Arabic atomistic concept of knowledge, definitions, like aphorisms, were greatly appreciated in Islam. Philosophy and philology demanded them. Şûfism, with its willful assignment of meanings to terms and terms to meanings, was particularly fond of them. Such definitions always present an instructive cross section of the various views held in connection with a given topic. For a proper understanding, they require explanation and elaboration, but often they strip away the layers of obfuscation created by lengthy expositions. A perusal of a large number of definitions of “knowledge” is a helpful introduction to the discussion contained in the following chapters. In a brief compass, it anticipates a good deal of what can be expected to be found there.

Collections of definitions were not infrequently made by medieval scholars in various fields of scholarly activity. The mystic philosopher, Ibn Sabʿîn (d. 669/1270), brought together an extensive and rather mixed batch of definitions of “knowledge” in his *Budd al-ʿarīf*.<sup>1</sup> However, it was speculative theology that passionately sought after a satisfying brief definition of *ʿilm*. Philosophers knew that no brief definition would do for them. Philologists had no need to consider the problems behind the seemingly plain meaning of the term, and they were naturally followed in this respect by the educators. Mystics were rather slow in working *ʿilm* into their particular vocabulary as a special term. But theology had a fundamental stake in the explanation of what “knowledge” really meant and of finding an acceptable definition for it that

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<sup>1</sup> I used the Istanbul manuscript Bagdath Vehbi Ef. 833, fols. 66a–67b, 74a, and 85a. The definitions have been numbered by me, and the number in brackets following the title of the work refers to this numbering. A few definitions of knowledge are also mentioned in Ibn Sabʿîn’s *Ahd* which he addressed to his pupils, ed. ʿAbd-ar-Rahmân Badawî, in *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos*, V (1957), 41. In the *Ahd*, Ibn Sabʿîn refers to his large collection of definitions from the *Budd*. M. Schreiner, in *ZDMG*, LII (1898), 504, n. 1, indicates that he was aware of the *Budd*. N. Rescher, *The Development of Arabic Logic*, 201 (Pittsburgh 1964), mentions a doctoral dissertation by S. Lator, *Die Logik des Ibn Sabʿîn* (Munich and Rome 1942), which I have not seen.

would apply to God and man, to faith and to reason. It thus was the home and focal point for Muslim definitions of “knowledge.” The basic guidelines for the phrasing of these definitions can be assumed to have been operative at the very beginnings of *kalâm* and to have produced a small set of definitions which remained fundamentally unchanged but in minor rewordings provided an outlet for intellectual creativity. As it happened, some powerful personalities such as al-Ash‘arî (around 900) or al-Bâqillânî (d. 403/1013) incorporated one or the other definition in their teaching or their writings, and their names thereafter became attached to it, providing one of those useful classifying labels that are always much valued by philosophical and theological system-makers. The names of the original coiners of the Arabic form of a given definition of *‘ilm* and their dates in history can, it seems, no longer be recovered except through uncritical reliance on later tradition. Even the authorship of such important distinctions as the insistence upon *sukûn an-nafs* generally credited to the Mu‘tazilah (see below, F-3) can hardly be pinned down with any amount of certainty. The early ninth century appears to be a good general date for the completion of the first stage in the history of these definitions.

No handbook on speculative theology large or small could avoid going into a discussion of the definitions of *‘ilm*. In the course of time, the material to be discussed grew, and the form which this discussion had to take hardened. By the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the high point of this development had been reached. The authoritative collection of definitions of *‘ilm* to serve the purposes of speculative theology was made by al-Âmidî (d. 631/1233). In the opening pages of his great *Abkâr al-afkâr*, al-Âmidî reported and discussed these definitions thoroughly.<sup>2</sup> Predecessors of al-Âmidî on a smaller scale were such important scholars as the

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<sup>2</sup> Among other manuscripts, I used the Istanbul manuscript Aya Sofya 2165 (the second volume of the work bears the number 2166). Both volumes exhibit the signature of ‘Abd-al-Wahhâb as-Subkî with the date of 763/1361–62 at the bottom right of their respective title-pages. The title-page of the second volume, at the top left, has preserved the signature of a former owner, Khalîl b. Kaykaldî al-‘Alâ‘î, who had died two years before as-Subkî put his name to the volumes. Another manuscript of the work, Aya Sofya 2167, is dated in 771/March 16, 1370. Its second volume, Aya Sofya 2168, is dated in 772/September 1370. The *Abkâr* was completed in 612/April 1216. Some definitions of knowledge which al-Âmidî considered acceptable were also discussed by him at some length in his *Ihkâm fî usûl al-ahkâm*, I, 6 f. (Cairo 1347).

Imâm al-Ḥaramayn (d. 478/1083),<sup>3</sup> al-Bazdawî (d. 493/1100),<sup>4</sup> and Aḥmad b. Maḥmûd as-Ṣâbûnî (d. 580/1184).<sup>5</sup> There must have been many others in their time and even before. The *Abkâr* served as the principal source for the discussion of the subject to be found a century later in the *Mawâqif* of al-Îjî (d. 756/1355).<sup>6</sup> Al-Îjî, in turn, furnished practically all the essential raw material that went into the exhaustive article on *‘ilm* from at-Tahânanawî’s *Kashshâf*, 1055–66, of the mid-eighteenth century. It can fairly be said that at-Tahânanawî there summarized all the ideas ever expressed by Muslim thinkers on “knowledge.”

An understandable reaction against the presumptuousness of man who claimed to be able to reduce to capsule form something that spanned the world of man and God makes itself felt in the repeated suggestion that no definition of “knowledge” was, in fact, possible. This suggestion was discussed, for instance, by al-Ghazzâlî<sup>7</sup> as well as al-Âmidî (in both the *Abkâr* and the *Ihkâm*). Knowledge cannot be verbally defined because it is too difficult and complicated for simple definition; it can be defined only through disjunction (*qis-mah*) and example (*mithâl*) (Imâm al-Ḥaramayn and al-Ghazzâlî).<sup>8</sup> Or, as stated by Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî (d. 606/1209), the knowledge of knowledge must be intuitive (*badîhî*) or necessary (*darûrî*); if it were neither, circular reasoning would result, since definition is possible only through knowledge.<sup>9</sup> Al-Âmidî’s attitude in this respect will be reported

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Imâm al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynî, *Kitâb al-Irshâd*, 12 f. (Cairo 1369/1950), trans. Schreiner, in *ZDMG*, LII (1898), 495 f.

For the *Uṣûl ad-dîn* by ‘Abd-al-Qâhir al-Baghdadî (d. 429/1037), cf. A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 251 (Cambridge 1932). The recent reprint (above, p. 19, n. 1) became available to me only after this book had gone to press.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. al-Bazdawî, *Uṣûl ad-dîn*, ed. H. P. Linss, 10 (Cairo 1383/1963).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. as-Ṣâbûnî, *al-Kifâyah fî sharḥ al-Bidâyah fî uṣûl ad-dîn*, in the Istanbul Ms. Laleli 2271, fols. 3b–4a. The manuscript was written in 677/1279.

<sup>6</sup> I used the *Mawâqif* in the edition Cairo 1357, 9–11. The Topkapusaray Ms. Koğuş 861 dated in 753/1352 claims to be written by the hand of the author. The translation by J. van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des ‘Aḥudaddîn al-Îcî* (Wiesbaden 1966), contains a vast amount of information relevant to many of the aspects of *kalâm* epistemology, treated here much more briefly.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mustasfâ*, I, 17 (Cairo 1356/1937).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. also Ibn as-Sâ’âtî (d. 696/1296, or 694), *Matn al-badî’ fî ‘ilm al-uṣûl*, Istanbul Ms. Feyzullah 566, fol. 3b.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. al-Âmidî (below, pp. 224 f.) and al-‘Aynî, *Umdat al-qâri’*, I, 380. Al-‘Aynî’s remarks, in turn, were reproduced in an abbreviated form by al-Qaṣṭallânî, *Irshâd as-sâri’*, I, 178 (Bûlâq 1288).



later on.<sup>10</sup> About a century after al-Âmidî, the question was taken up by the great Shî'ah theologian, al-'Allâmah al-Ḥillî (648–726/1250–1325). He denied the impossibility of a definition proposed on these two grounds: “1. Anything outside knowledge is revealed only through knowledge; thus, it is impossible for anything other than knowledge to reveal knowledge. And 2. I know necessarily that I am knowing through my existence, which is a special knowledge preceded by the perception of knowledge absolute. Now, some thorough scholars have objected to the first argument that the information desired from a definition of knowledge is the knowledge of knowledge. It is not absurd to assume that it (i.e., knowledge) reveals something else, and something else reveals the knowledge of it (i.e., knowledge). I say: When we say, for instance, that knowledge is an attribute requiring one's own satisfaction (*sukûn an-nafs*), such a statement defines knowledge, but this is recognized only through knowledge. Thus, we might have an occurrence of circular reasoning. Here, the correct view, as you should know, is that knowledge is either a relative (*idâfiyah*) attribute subsisting in the knower (see below, A-14), or a form corresponding to the object known (see below, E-1), according to the two different views and twin assumptions (that is, general accepted alternatives). The object known is known only when that form is present or that attribute comes to the knower. Knowledge of that attribute or that form, through definition or indication (*rasm*),<sup>11</sup> belongs to what is not known. But the object known rests upon knowledge in the first instance in a way different from the way in which knowledge of that form rests upon definition or indication. Thus, there is no circular reasoning. The second argument is weak. We have shown its weakness in the *Kitâb Ma'ârij al-fahm* ‘The Degrees of Understanding’ (which is preserved but as other works of the 'Allâmah al-Ḥillî important for our subject is unfortunately not accessible).”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See below, p. 225.

<sup>11</sup> *Rasm* is a definition consisting of a brief designation of a distinctive characteristic of the object defined, whereas *ḥadd*, the technical term for definition, is a definition describing the nature of the object defined, cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Ihkâm*, I, 35 f. (Cairo, 1345–48). Cf. also A.-M. Goichon, *Lexique de la langue philosophique d'Ibn Sînâ*, 143 f. (Paris 1938); al-Ghazzâlî, *Maqâsid*, II, 8; Goichon, in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. *ḥadd*, etc.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. al-'Allâmah al-Ḥillî, *Anwâr al-malakût fî sharḥ al-Yâqût*, ed. M. Najmî-Zanjânî, 12 f. (Teheran 1338). The work, a commentary on the *Yâqût* by a certain Nawbakhtî who appears to have lived in the tenth century, was written in 684/1285. See below, p. 214.

In a work on Avicennian philosophy, knowledge is adjudged incapable of definition, because knowledge “is a condition of the soul (*ḥālah nafsānīyah*) which he who is alive finds in (*min*) his soul at the beginning without any equivocation . . . Knowledge can dispense with a definition, for whatever recognizes a thing is able to recognize its being cognizant of that thing without logical proof and speculation. Knowledge that one knows a thing stands for knowledge of one’s essence having the attribute (*ittiṣāf*) of knowledge. Now, knowledge of the attribution of a complete process (*ittiṣāf amr tāmm*) calls for the knowledge of each of the two things, that is, the object (*mawṣūf*) and the attribute (*ṣifah*). If the knowledge of the reality of knowledge were acquired, it would be absurd to assume that our knowing a thing could be known without speculation and deductive reasoning. As this is not so, it is established that the knowledge of the reality of knowledge dispenses with acquisition.”<sup>13</sup>

Mystics also may at times feel repelled by the thought of defining knowledge. Thus, al-Qôṇawî (d. 672/1273) brands someone who attempts to define “knowledge” as either ignorant of the true meaning (*sirr*) of knowledge or being a gnostic desirous to indicate his position with regard to some of the attributes of knowledge while not intending to give a complete definition.<sup>14</sup> He had in mind the true knowledge of the mystic, which is the only knowledge he recognizes as such and which he in fact defines in another of his works in terms of a general definition of knowledge (see below, L-5).

Where all theological endeavors that smacked of philosophical speculation were in ill repute, as they were with later traditionalist scholars, we also hear it said that the efforts to define “knowledge” were nothing but nefarious attempts made by anti-religious individuals for the purpose of confusing an issue that was clear and obvious. Ibn al-‘Arabî (d. 543/1148) expressed this idea in his commentary on the *Ṣaḥîḥ* of at-Tirmidhî in these words: “Knowledge is too clear a concept to require an explanation, but heretical innovators have wished to complicate the understanding of the

<sup>13</sup> Cf. the Bursa Ms. Ulu Cami 2211, fol. 115b. The author and the title of the work are not known to me, but they may in fact be very well known. The edges of the manuscript carry the inscription *Kitâb fî l-ḥikmah wa-l-kalâm*, which is merely descriptive of the contents, but we also find there *Kitâb Sharḥ Maqâsid*. . . (of al-Ghazzâlî?).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. al-Qôṇawî, *Ijâz al-bayân fî ta’wîl umm al-Qur’ân*, 49 Hyderabad 1368/1949).

term “knowledge” and of other religious and intellectual concepts, their aim being to lead people astray and to give them the erroneous impression that there exists no concept (*ma‘nā*) that can be known. However, these are baseless claims and sophistries.”<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, there were many definitions, and the process of polishing and discussing them never stopped. The classification of these definitions in the list that follows is neither historical nor in accordance with categories that might have been used by Muslim scholars themselves. It attempts to arrange the definitions according to what seems to be their most essential elements, even at the risk of separating what should rather remain together, or of restricting to one class what may at the same time also belong into another. It also does not take into account the likelihood that some variations may be due to the willful or unintentional inaccuracy of the reporter, as in the case of Ibn Ḥazm’s discussion of Ash‘arite definitions. (A classification according to essential elements was, however, considered appropriate also by Muslim theologians, as shown by Judge ‘Abd-al-Jabbār’s discussion in the twelfth part of his *Mughnī* dealing with epistemology. ‘Abd-al-Jabbār has many trenchant observations on the definitions listed below under B, C, D, F, and H. The Cairo edition of this volume of the *Mughnī* by Ibrāhīm Madkour is not dated and became available to me only in the beginning of 1969.)

Summarily, it may be said that most of the definitions are based on the assumption that the explanation of a subjective mental (psychological) process in its relationship to the objective, the mastery of concrete data, somehow suffices to grasp the nature of knowledge. It seems to have been considered an established fact that the object known (*ma‘lūm*) is prior to knowledge; this, as Muslim thinkers were well aware, was a problem discussed by Aristotle in his logic. Quite a few of the definitions suggested rely on some kind of tautology and do not in effect shed any true light on the problem, as was already pointed out by Muslim critics. Further clarification will be found in a later chapter where the commentary of al-Āmidī is translated (below, pp. 220 ff.).

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ibn al-‘Arabī, *‘Aṣṣat al-ahwadhī*, X, 114 (Cairo 1353/1934). “Sophistic” skepticism with regard to the reality and possibility of any knowledge was the greatly feared and consistently rejected bugaboo of all the authors cited here, cf. below, p. 302. The difficult term *ma‘nā* needs further elucidation, cf., for instance, below, p. 123, n. 6.

A. Knowledge is the process of knowing and identical with the knower and the known, or it is an attribute enabling the knower to know.

1. "Knowledge is that through which one knows."<sup>16</sup>
2. "Knowledge is that through which the essence is knowing."<sup>17</sup>
3. "Knowledge is that through which the object known (*al-ma'lûm*) is known."<sup>18</sup>
4. "Knowledge is that through which the knower knows the object known."<sup>19</sup>
5. "Knowledge is that through which the knower is knowing."<sup>20</sup>
6. "Knowledge is that which necessitates for him in whom it subsists the name of knower."<sup>21</sup>
7. "Knowledge is that which necessitates that he in whom it subsists is knowing."<sup>22</sup> This definition is ascribed to al-Ash'arî.
8. "Knowledge is that which necessitates that he in whom it resides (*maḥall*) is knowing."<sup>23</sup>
9. "Knowledge stands for the object known."<sup>24</sup>
10. "Knowledge is but the concepts known (*al-ma'ânî al-ma'lûmah*)."<sup>25</sup> This is transmitted as the definition of Themistius.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mustasfâ*, I, 16, with added discussion; al-Âmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 2b. Al-Âmidî indicates that he derived this definition from a certain Abû 1-Qâsim al-Isfarâ'îni. The phrase *mâ yu'lam*, as well as *bih 'âlim(ah)*, of the definitions 2 and 5, might conceivably and with some difficulty be translated, "that which one (essence, knower) knows," whereby "knowledge" appears equated with "the known." However, this is not meant.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mustasfâ*, I, 16, with added discussion, and *Mi'yâr al-'ilm*, ed. S. Dunyâ, 280 (Cairo 1961); aṣ-Ṣabûnî, *Kifâyah* (as the definition of al-Ash'arî) ("becomes knowing").

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Imâm al-Haramayn, *Luma'*, 88.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted as al-Ash'arî's definition in Ms. Köprülü I, 856, fol. 2a. This is the manuscript wrongly ascribed to al-Mâturîdî in C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (cited henceforth as *GAL*), *Supplement*, I, 346 (Weimar and Berlin 1898–1902, Leiden 1937–49). cf. H. Ritter, in *Der Islam*, XVIII (1929), 40.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the Istanbul Ms. Aya Sofya 2378, fol. 21a. Its authorship remains to be determined. The manuscript itself is dated in 790/1388. The definition said to be that of "the oldest (greatest?, *al-akbarîn*) of our colleagues."

<sup>21</sup> Cf. al-Âmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 2b, where al-Ash'arî is indicated as the author of this definition.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. al-Âmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 2b; al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*; at-Tahânawî, 1058.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd* (as the definition of "our Shaykh," apparently al-Ash'arî); Ibn Sab'în, *Budd* (3).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Badâ'i' al-fawa'id*, II, 91 (Cairo, n. y.). Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Maqâsid*, II, 73.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Kitâb as-Sa'âdah*, 58.

11. "Knowledge is the mentally existing object (*al-mawjūd adh-dhihmī*)."<sup>26</sup>

12. "Knowledge is the attribute through which the knower knows."<sup>27</sup>

13. "Knowledge is an attribute through which he who is alive becomes knowing."<sup>28</sup> Cf. below, J-2.

14. "Knowledge is an attribute expressing the relationship (*ṣifah idāfīyah*) between the knower and the object known."<sup>29</sup> Cf. above, p. 49, and below, I-1.

15. "Knowledge is an attribute through which the conditions of the object known become clear as they are (*ʿalā mā huwa ʿalayh min aḥwālīh*)."<sup>30</sup> Cf. below, D-1.

B. Knowledge is cognition (*maʿrifah*).<sup>31</sup>

1. "Knowledge is cognition."<sup>32</sup>

2. "Knowledge is the cognition of the object known as it is (*ʿalā mā huwa bih*)."<sup>33</sup> This definition was adopted by al-Bāqillānī,

<sup>26</sup> Cf. at-Tahānawī, 1061, l. 27, to 1062, l. 1, as a definition of the philosophers. Al-Ījī, *Mawāqif*, speaks of knowledge as built upon ideal existence (*al-wujūd adh-dhihmī*).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ibn Sabʿīn, *Budd* (15).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. ʿAbd-al-Qāhir, *Uṣūl*, 5 f.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Abū l-Barakāt Hibatallāh al-Baghdādī, *Muʿtabar*, III, 2 (Hyderabad 1357–58/1938–39); al-Āmidī, *Abkār*, fol. 3b. One of the manuscripts of the *Abkār* has wrongly "knowledge." for "knower."

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Iḥkām*, I, 38, in a polemic against the Ashʿarite definition D-1.

<sup>31</sup> The selection of "cognition" to translate *maʿrifah* in this connection is completely arbitrary, considering the wide range of meanings for *ʿr-f* in its relation to *ʿl-m*. For the relation of *ʿilm* and *maʿrifah* in definitions, cf. also below, p. 115, n. 2 and p. 117, n. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Mustasfā*, I, 16, and *Mīyār al-ʿilm*, 275 (rejecting such a definition). Al-Ghazzālī explains that it may be argued hypothetically that knowledge is cognition "because every knowledge is belief, and every belief is cognition. Cognition is a wider term."

<sup>33</sup> Cf. al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, ed. R. J. McCarthy, 6 (Beirut 1956); an-Nawbakhtī, *Yāqūt*, as quoted and discussed by the ʿAllāmah al-Ḥillī, *Anwār al-malakūt*, 12 f., 134 ff.; Imām al-Ḥaramayn, *Irshād*; al-Bāḡī, *Risālah fī l-ḥudūd*, ed. J. (Gouda) Hilāl, in *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos*, II (1954), 4; aṣ-Ṣābūnī, *Kifāyah*, as an Ashʿarite definition: Ibn Sabʿīn, *Aḥd*, where the definition is described as derived from the "fundamentalists" (*usūliyyūn*), those who deal with the principles of religion; Ms. Aya Sofya 2378, fol. 20b. Al-Bāqillānī is cited for this definition by al-Āmidī, *Abkār*, fol. 2a, as well as al-Ījī, *Mawāqif*; and at-Tahānawī, 1057, l. 21, all of whom discuss its validity. Cf., further, al-Bazdawī, who describes this definition as the one suggested by the men of the *sunnah* and *jamāʿah*, that is, the "orthodox" scholars, and al-Ghazzālī, *Mustasfā*, I, 16.

and it is therefore often credited to him. It is, however, clear that al-Bâqillânî was not the first to use it.

The last word of the definition (*bih*) is exceptionally replaced by *'alayh*.<sup>34</sup> This appears to be a mere oversight. In the *Budd*, this definition occurs also at the very beginning of the list of definitions, but without either *bih* or *'alayh*. It is difficult to say whether this omission is another mistake just as Ibn Sab'în's subsequent use of *'alayh* for *bih*, or whether it was intended to be another meaningful variant.

In connection with this definition, certain Greek definitions of "philosophy" are relevant. Nicomachus of Gerasa, in his *Arithmêtikê Eisagôgê* as translated into Arabic by Thâbit b. Qurrah, ed. Kutsch, 13, ll. 8 f., says that "wisdom (*hikmah*, translating "philosophy") is the certain knowledge of the reality (*haqîqah*) of the existing things as they are." John of Damascus gives a definition of philosophy which appears to be the exact Greek equivalent of this particular definition of knowledge and is likely to have been its prototype. He speaks of philosophy as "cognition of the existing things *qua* existing things" (*gnôsis tôn ontôn hêi onta estin*).<sup>35</sup>

It may be added that a late author, al-'Aynî, in his *Umdat al-qârî*, I, 247, defines "wisdom" as "the cognition of things as they are," but for al-'Aynî, I, 440, "wisdom" is a synonym of "knowledge."

3. "Knowledge is the cognition of a thing (*ash-shay'*) as it is."<sup>36</sup> As compared to the preceding definition, "object known" is

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Ibn Sab'în, *Budd* (17) (Ms. Bagdath Vehbi Ef. 833, fol. 74a), describing this definition as the one preferred by Ash'arites.

It may be noted that *'alâ ma huwa 'alayh* was used to translate Greek *hyparchein*, cf. the Arabic translation of the Aristotelian *Physics* 197a29, ed. 'Abd-ar-Rahmân Badawî, 125 (Cairo 1384-85/1964-65).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. John of Damascus, *Pégê gnôseôs*, in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, 94, 521, Engl. trans. F. H. Chase, 11 (New York 1958).

According to the Jâbir corpus, "philosophical knowledge is the knowledge of the realities of the caused existing things," cf. P. Kraus, *Jâbir ibn Hayyân, Textes choisis*, 104 (Paris and Cairo 1935).

<sup>36</sup> Al-Bâqillânî, *Tamhîd*, 6, and al-Bazdawî discuss and reject this definition; al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ'*, I, 26. English trans. N. A. Faris, 73 (Lahore 1962); versified in Ibn Bassâm. *Dhakhîrah*, I, 2, 409 (Cairo 1361/1942).

An almost identical definition was employed in thirteenth-century Europe, cf. W. G. Waite, *Johannes de Garlandia*, in *Speculum*, 35 (1960), 187. Cf. also the definition of F. Sanchez (Sanches) (1552-1623): *Scientia est vei perfecta cognitio*, quoted here from R. H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes*, 40 (Assen, Netherlands, 1960).

replaced here by “thing.” The difference is considered meaningful. Use of the term “thing,” it is argued, excludes knowledge of the non-existent. The non-existent is one of the possible objects of knowledge. Therefore, it ought to be covered by a definition that fulfills the required condition of comprehensiveness. It is, as soon as “object known” is used instead of “thing.” Cf. also below, C-2 and D-2.

4. “Knowledge is certain cognition (*tayaqqun*) of a thing as it is.”<sup>37</sup>

5. “Knowledge is the cognition of things and their realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*) without mistake or error.”<sup>38</sup> Cf. below, C-12.

6. “Knowledge is the cognition of the object known to one’s own satisfaction (*maʿa sukūn an-nafs*).”<sup>39</sup> For *sukūn an-nafs* as a Muʿtazilah modification, cf. below, F-3.

7. “Knowledge is the cognition of the cause of the object known as being a cause of that particular object known.”<sup>40</sup> This definition is stated to go back to Alexander of Aphrodisias.

8. “Knowledge of a thing is the knowledge of the causes of its existence.”<sup>41</sup>

9. “... Knowledge is likewise cognition and perception, but in addition, it is granting him who hears and understands room for agreement and disagreement concerning the statement made...”<sup>42</sup>

10. “Knowledge is that which one knows for certain and understands clearly.”<sup>43</sup>

11. “Knowledge is excellent cognition and the constant application to the excellent art.”<sup>44</sup> This definition occurs in the beginning of the Arabic translation of the Pseudo-Plutarchan *Placita* where the Stoics speak of philosophy as the practice of a proper art

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Ihkām*, I, 30.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Ibn Farighūn, *Jawāmiʿ al-ʿulūm*, Ms. Topkapusaray, Ahmet III 2768, fol. 67a.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. al-ʿAllāmah al-Hillī, *Amwār al-malakūt*, 12 f., 134 ff.; Ibn Sabʿīn, *Budd* (5).

<sup>40</sup> *Kitāb as-Saʿādah*, 58. The first “object known” is a necessary correction of *al-ʿulūm* of the text.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. ʿAbd-al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, *Mā baʿd aṭ-ṭabīʿah*, Istanbul Ms. Carullah 1279, fol. 153b.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Abū l-Barakāt, *Muʿtabar*, II, 395.

<sup>43</sup> Ibn ʿAbd-al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm*, II, 36 (Cairo, n.y.), considers this the definition of the speculative theologians. He adds: “Everybody who knows for certain and has a clear understanding of a thing knows it. Correspondingly, whoever does not know a thing for certain and speaks about it on the basis of traditional information (*taqlīd*<sup>44</sup>) does not know it.”

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Pseudo-Plutarch, *Placita*, ed. Daiberger, 123.

(*askêsin epitêdeiou technês*), namely, virtue. The equation of *sophia* or *philosophia* with virtue may have seemed to the translator an incomplete definition of “knowledge,” and he therefore added the reference to cognition. This would also indicate the existence of the definition of *ilm* by *maʿrifah* in the ninth century.

C. Knowledge is a process of “obtaining” (*d-r-k*, *h-ṣ-l*) or “finding” through mental perception. This reflects a Stoic definition of knowledge attributed to Zeno, speaking of knowledge as *katalêpsis asphalês*, cf. Diogenes Laertius, VII, 47. The use of *idrâk* for translating Greek *katalêpsis* is attested in Nicomachus of Gerasa, *Arithmêtikê Eisagôgê*, 2, ll. 9 f. Hoche, Ar. trans., ed. Kutsch, 11, l. 10.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, knowledge is a process of “comprehending.”

1. “Knowledge is the perception (*idrâk*) of the object known as it is (*ʿalâ mâ huwa bih*).”<sup>46</sup> This definition is primarily credited to al-Ashʿarî.

2. “Knowledge is the perception of a thing as it is,”<sup>47</sup> or, “of a thing in its reality (*bi-haqîqatih*).”<sup>48</sup> For the replacement of “object known” by “thing,” cf. above, B-3.

When we read in the work of a littérateur that “the intellect (*ʿaql*) is the perception of things in their realities,”<sup>49</sup> we are forced to conclude that this statement is based upon an unthinking substitution of “intellect” for “knowledge.”

3. “Knowledge is attaining (*darak*) the object perceived (*mudrak*) as it is (*ʿalâ mâ huwa ʿalayh*) itself, provided that attaining it is not impossible.”<sup>50</sup>

4. “Knowledge is the perception of the realities of things through traditional and intellectual channels (*masmûʿ<sup>m</sup> wa-maʿqûl<sup>m</sup>*).”<sup>51</sup>

<sup>45</sup> For other Greek equivalents of *idrâk*, cf. S. M. Afnan, *Philosophical Terminology in Arabic and Persian*, 105 f. (Leiden 1964). M. van den Bergh’s equation of *katalêptos* with *mafhûm* or *maʿlûm* is not based upon actual occurrences in the translation literature, which remain to be found, cf. his translation of *Averroes’ Tahafut al-Tahafut*, II, 45, 55, 112 (Oxford and London 1954, *E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series*, N. S. 19).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. al-Âmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 2b; al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*, at-Tahânawî, 1058, l. 3, as well as al-Bazdawî. Cf., further, Ms. Aya Sofya 2378, fol. 20b, and Ibn ʿAbd-al-Barr, *Jâmiʿ*, II, 117, who combines this definition with D-2.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Ibn Bukhtîshûʿ, *ar-Rawḍah at-ṭibbiyah*, ed. P. Sbath, 46 (Cairo 1927).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. ar-Râghib al-Îsfahânî, *Mufradât*, III, 138.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Ibn ʿAbd-Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, II, 249 (reprint Cairo 1375/1956).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Ibn ʿArabî, *al-Futûḥât al-Makkîyah*, I, 91 f. (Cairo and Mecca 1329), below, p. 190.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. al-Ibshîhî, *Mustatraf*, I, 23 (Bûlâq 1268).



5. "Knowledge is the perception of the realities of the existing things *qua* existing things (*bi-mâ hiya mawjûdât*)."<sup>52</sup>

6. "Knowledge is the attainment (*tahsîl*) by the heart of some matter corresponding to what it is itself, whether this matter is non-existent or existent."<sup>53</sup>

7. "Knowledge is the finding (*wijdân*) of things in their realities."<sup>54</sup>

8. "Knowledge is the finding (*yâftan*) of the things as the things are."<sup>55</sup>  
This would seem to be a combination of C-2 and C-7, unless it is in fact identical with C-2, Persian *yâftan* "to find" being used for translating *idrâk*. However, this would seem unlikely. "Finding," as shown in C-7, belongs to the philosophical vocabulary in connection with "knowledge." However, like the idea of comprehending, it was a term suitable to the intuitive, mystical approach toward "knowledge," especially in combination with "heart," "soul," or "breast."

9. "Knowledge is the finding by the soul of its objective when suspicions (doubts, *riyab*) occur to a person concerning it (*fî amrih*)."<sup>56</sup>

10. "Knowledge is finding in the heart and firm conviction (*thubûât*) without change."<sup>57</sup>

11. "Knowledge is that which comprises firm conviction without allowing for any change."<sup>58</sup>

12. "Knowledge is the comprehension (*ihâṭah*) of the thing as it is (*‘alâ mâ huwa ‘alayh*) without mistake or error."<sup>59</sup> Cf. above, B-5.

13. "Knowledge can be described as the comprehension (*ihâṭah*)

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Ibn Sab'în, *Budd* (18) (Ms. Bagdath Vehbi Ef. 833, fol. 85a); Istanbul Ms. Raghîb 1483, fol. 106b. The Raghîb manuscript has a number of definitions introduced by *qâla sh-Shaykh* which appear to have been written by a hand more recent than the rest of the manuscript.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Ibn 'Arabî, *Futûḥât*, I, 91, below, p. 188.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. al-Kindî, *Hudûd*, in *Rasâ'il al-Kindî*, I, 169; Muḥammad b. 'Alî b. 'Abdallâh al-Hindî, *Ḥumal al-falsafah*, in the autograph manuscript dated in 529/1135 and preserved in Istanbul, Ms. Esat Ef. 1918, fol. 3a, I wish to thank Professor Fuat Sezgin for having drawn my attention to this manuscript.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Nâsir-i-Khosraw, quoted here from A. E. Bertels, *Nasir-i Khosrov i Ismailizm*, 235 (Moscow 1959).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Abû Ḥayyân at-Tawḥîdî, *Muqâbasât*, 365 (Cairo 1347/1929). *Fî amrih* hardly means "in his business."

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Ibn Sab'în, *Budd* (9).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Ibn Sab'în, *Budd* (8). *Muta'ayyin* of the manuscript (if my copy is correct) has to be corrected to *mutaghayyir*.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. al-'Âmirî, *al-I'lam bi-manâqib al-Islâm*, ed. A. 'Abd-al-Ḥamîd Ghurâb, 84 (Cairo 1387/1967).

of the objects known . . . , it comprises the reality of every object known, or it would not be known.”<sup>60</sup>

14. “Knowledge is but what the breast contains (*wa‘āhu*).”<sup>61</sup>

D. Knowledge is a process of clarification, assertion, and decision (*bayyana, mayyaza, athbata, qaṭa‘a*). Cf. also B-10.

1. “Knowledge is the clear understanding (*tabayyun*) of the object known as it is (*‘alā mā huwa bih*).”<sup>62</sup> Cf. also above, A-15.

2. “Knowledge is the explanation (*tabyīn?*) of a thing as it is (*‘alā mā huwa ‘alayh*).”<sup>63</sup> “Explanation” would seem to be a clerical mistake for “clear understanding,” although *tabyīn* is also found in Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr (see above, p. 56, n. 2). For “thing” instead of “object known,” cf. above, B-3.

3. Knowledge is the asseveration (*ithbāt*) of the object known as it is (*‘alā mā huwa bih*).”<sup>64</sup>

4. “Knowledge is that which clarifies (*abāna*) the truth and gives information (*a‘lā al-fā‘idah*), without leaving (the need) for anything to be investigated.”<sup>65</sup>

5. “Knowledge stands for an attribute (*ṣifah*) through which the soul of him who possesses this attribute attains the discernment (*tamyīz*) of some reality not perceivable by the senses [in the soul, hus guarding himself against the *sensibilia*, at which he arrives] in a way that does not leave open the possibility that it could be different from the manner in which it has arrived.”<sup>66</sup> Fakhr-ad-dīn ar-Rāzī has what appears to have been intended as the same

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Ibn ‘Arabi, *Futuhāt*, I, 43. Cf. also below, p. 117, n. 1.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Abū Ḥayyān at-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtā‘ wa-l-mu‘ānasah*, ed. A. Amīn and A. az-Zayn, II, 150 (Cairo 1939–44).

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Imām al-Haramayn, *Irshād*; al-Bazdawī; al-Āmidī, *Abkār*, fol. 3a, referring to one of his colleagues (*ba‘d al-aṣḥāb*); also briefly referred to by al-Ījī, *Mawāqif*; at-Tahānawī, 1058, ll. 15 f.; Ms. Aya Sofya 2378, fol. 21a. *Tabayyun* is the reading found in the works of the Imām al-Haramayn and al-Bazdawī. The Aya Sofya manuscript and al-Āmidī have *byn* (no dots). However, Ms. Aya Sofya 2167 of the *Abkār* has *thyn*. The reading *tabyīn* of al-Ījī and at-Tahānawī appears to be a mistake, despite the occurrence of the form in the following definition. Cf. also above, A-15.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Ibn Sab‘īn, *Budd* (2).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. al-Āmidī, *Abkār*, fol. 2b, citing one of his colleagues; Ms. Aya Sofya 2378, fol. 20b; al-Ījī, *Mawāqif*.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Ibn Sab‘īn, *Budd* (7).

<sup>66</sup> Cf. al-Āmidī, *Abkār*, fol. 3a, who discusses this definition, considering it the most acceptable of all the definitions proposed. The words in square brackets are not to be found in Ms. Topkapusaray, Ahmet III 1774, of the *Abkār*. They apparently do not belong here.

definition in a briefer and rather different form which does not make mention of “discernment” and is therefore listed below, E-13. Strangely enough, Ms. Aya Sofya 2167 of al-Âmidî’s *Abkâr* substitutes the text of E-13 for the definition cited here.

6. “Knowledge stands for an attribute through which the soul of him who possesses this particular attribute attains a distinction (*tamayyuz*) between the realities of the universal concepts (or meanings, *ma‘ânî kul-lîyah*) in a way that does not leave open the possibility of its opposite (*naqîd*).”<sup>67</sup>

7. “Knowledge is an attribute that necessitates that he in whom it resides (*maḥall*) distinguishes (*tamyîz*) between the concepts (*ma‘ânî*) in a way that does not admit of the opposite.”<sup>68</sup>

8. “Knowledge is to be defined as an attribute that necessitates a discernment (*tamyîz*) that does not leave open the possibility of the opposite in matters concerned with (abstract) concepts.”<sup>69</sup> In connection with D-10, at-Tahâdawî considers and rejects this definition, even when one omits the restriction to abstract concepts and includes sense perception.

9. “Knowledge is the discernment (*tamyîz*) of a concept in the soul that does not leave open the possibility of (its) opposite.”<sup>70</sup>

10. “Knowledge is an attribute through which the object mentioned (remembered?, *madhkûr*) becomes revealed to him in whom (that attribute) subsists.”<sup>71</sup> Aṣ-Ṣâbûnî considers this the definition of Abû Manṣûr (al-Mâturîdî?), which he accepts as the best one known to him. At-Taftâzânî adds this comment: “that is, whatever is mentioned (remembered?) becomes clear and obvious and can be expressed, whether it is existent or nonexistent.”

11. “The purpose of knowledge is but the decision (*qaṭ‘*) concern-

<sup>67</sup> Cf. al-Âmidî, *Ihkâm*, I, 7, with added comment.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*, II, who considers this the best (*mukhtâr*) definition. At-Tahâdawî, 1058, ll. 26 f., shortens the definition to “that necessitates discernment between,” but takes over from al-Îjî the remark that it is the preferred definition of the speculative theologians.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. al-‘Aynî, *Umdat al-qârî*, I, 380 f. (cf. I, 466); al-Qaṣṣallânî, *Irshâd as-sâri*, I, 178. Omitting “in matters... concepts,” the definition is also discussed in Ms. Laleli 2221, fol. 16b.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. at-Tahâdawî, 1061, ll. 4 f.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. aṣ-Ṣâbûnî, *Kifâyah*, and at-Taftâzânî, *Commentary on the ‘Aqâ’id of an-Nasafî*, 99 f. (Cairo 1358/1939), trans. E. E. Elder, *A Commentary on the Creed of Islam*, 15 (New York 1950). The explanatory statement was added by at-Taftâzânî.

ing the object known that it is as we know it, without any suspicion (*rayb*) or doubt.”<sup>72</sup>

12. “The establishment (*taqarrur*) in the mind of the result of combination (*taʿlîf*) together with whatever truth is contained in it is called knowledge.”<sup>73</sup>

E. Knowledge is a form (*ṣûrah*), a concept or meaning (*maʿnâ*), a process of mental formation and imagination (*taṣawwur* “perception”) and/or mental verification (*taṣdîq* “apperception”). For knowledge as *taṣdîq* “faith,” cf. below, p. 101, n. 3.

1. “Knowledge is the form of the object known in the soul of the knower.”<sup>74</sup> A variant has “the arrival (*huṣûl*) of the form,” cf. also below, E-9.

2. “Knowledge is the delineation (*irtisâm*) of the form of the object known in the knower.”<sup>75</sup>

3. “The soul is originally knowing (*ʿallamah*), and knowledge is its form.”<sup>76</sup>

4. “Knowledge conforms fully (*mutâbiq*, *musâwî*) to the object known, because it is the spiritual form of the object known. The difference between the two is that the object known is a form whose substratum is matter, whereas knowledge is a form whose substratum is the soul.”<sup>77</sup>

5. “Knowledge stands for the fact that the form of the object known has impressed itself upon the soul.”<sup>78</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Ibn ʿArabî, *Futûḥât*, I, 34.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Abû l-Barakât, *Mûʿtabar*, I, 36 (cf. I, 70).

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Rasâʾil Ikhwân aṣ-ṣafâʾ*, I, 198, 317, III, 360, IV, 126 (Cairo 1347/1928). The plural (“the sciences are the forms . . .”) occurs in the *Rasâʾil*, I, 210, cf. also II, 7. Cf., further, at-Tawḥîdî, *Imtâʿ*, I, 40; Ibn Sabʿîn, *Budd* (4); Ms. Esat Ef. 1918, fol. 3a; at-Tahânwî, 1060, ll. 17 f., 1062, ll. 12 f., 1065, ll. 17 f.

The variant occurs in the Ankara Ms. Ismail Saib I, 2468 of Ibn Bukhtîshûʿs *Rawḍah*. The edition of the *Rawḍah*, 46, does not have the additional word.

<sup>75</sup> Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî, *al-Maʾâlîb al-ʿâliyah*, Ms. Bursa Hüseyin Çelebi 676, beg., quotes and discusses this definition as that of Abû l-ʿAbbâs al-Lawkarî contained in his *Tibyân (Bayân) al-haqq*. Al-Lawkarî was a student of Ibn Sînâ’s student, Bahmanyâr b. al-Marzubân.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. at-Tawḥîdî, *Imtâʿ*, III, 202.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. ʿAbd-al-Laṭîf al-Baghdâdî, *Mâ baʿd at-ṭabīʿah*, fol. 163a.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. al-ʿAmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 3a, as a definition of the “philosophers.” Al-Ghazâlî, *Maqâṣid*, II, 71 f., speaks of the impression of an immaterial form upon an immaterial essence.

6. "Knowledge is an apodictic formation (*hay'ah burhânîyah*)."<sup>79</sup> This definition is referred to Aristotle.

7. "Knowledge is the form of the thing in the mind (*adh-dhihn*)."<sup>80</sup>

8. "Knowledge is the form of the thing in the intellect (*al-'aql*)."<sup>81</sup>

9. "Knowledge is the arrival (*huṣūl*) of the form of a thing in the intellect."<sup>82</sup>

10. "Knowledge is the arrival of the form known at the knower" (or, "attainment by the knower of the form known").<sup>83</sup>

11. "Knowledge means that the mind obtains through it a form that conforms to the external object known."<sup>84</sup>

12. "Knowledge is the arrival (*wuṣūl*) of the soul at the meaning (*ma'nā*) of a thing."<sup>85</sup> Qinâlîzâdeh, who considers this the best definition known to him, explains that "when the arrival of the soul at the meaning of a thing comes, knowledge of that thing comes, in that the soul comes to it."

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *Kitâb as-Sa'âdah*, 57.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Akfânî, *Irshâd al-qâṣid*, ed. A. Sprenger, 96 (Calcutta 1849, *Bibliotheca Indica* 5).

<sup>81</sup> From the *Mutamimât at-Ta'rîfât al-Jurjânîyah*, a work possibly composed in the eighteenth century, cf. Ms. Yale University Library L-36 (Catalogue Nemoy 1116). The definition is attributed to the philosophers.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. al-Abharî, *Tanzîl al-afkâr fî ta'dîl al-asrâr*, Ms. Laleli 2562 (dated 686/1287), beg.; Ms. Aya Sofya 2526, fol. 13a, quoting the *Takwîhât*, the well-known work by as-Suhrawardî *al-maqtûl*. Further, *Qustâs al-afkâr fî tahqîq al-asrâr*, which is stated to have been composed in 683/1284 and, according to Ms. Aya Sofya 2565, to have as its author Shams-ad-dîn as-Samarqandî (?); al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*, who ascribes the definition to the philosophers and adds a discussion of it, as was also done by at-Tahânawî, 1056, l. 10; at-Taftâzânî, *Sharḥ at-Tahdhîb*, used here in the Istanbul Ms. Dâmat Ibrahim 1152, fol. 3a, also with added discussion; Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Bilâl al-Ḥanafî, at the beginning of a brief treatise dealing with *abḥâth tata'llaq bi-ta'rîf al-'ilm*, written for Mehmet b. Sulaymân b. Selim (d. 950/1543) and preserved in the Ankara Ms. Ismail Saib I, 2772.

<sup>83</sup> 'Alî Çelebi Qinâlîzâdeh (d. 979/1572, cf. *GAL*, II, 433, *Supplement*, II, 644) rejects this definition, "because knowledge is an attribute of the knower, whereas the arrival of the form of a thing is an attribute of the form, which is not the same thing." He prefers the definition E-12, and also the possible formulation that "knowledge is the arrival of the form of a thing for the intellect (*li-l-'aql*)."<sup>84</sup> Qinâlîzâdeh's ideas are known to me from a marginal note in the Bursa Ms. Haraççı 1378, fol. 5a, of al-Kâfiyâjî's commentary on at-Taftâzânî's *Tahdhîb fî l-manṭiq wa-l-kalâm*.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Abû l-Barakât, *Mu'tabar*, II, 398. Cf. Ibn 'Arabî, *Futûḥât*, I, 45.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî, *Sharḥ al-Ishârât*, which I consulted in the fourteenth-century manuscript in Fez, Qarawîyîn 406/80.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. above, n. 4.

13. "Knowledge stands for the arrival (*huṣūl*) in the soul of some concept (*ma'na*) in a way that does not leave open the possibility that it could be different from the manner in which it has arrived."<sup>86</sup> Cf. above, D-5 and D-9.

14. "Knowledge is the perception (*taṣawwūr*) of a thing according to its realities."<sup>87</sup> Almost identical formulations are: "The knower... is he who perceives (*mutaṣawwir*) a thing according to its reality,"<sup>88</sup> and, "Knowledge is perception (*taṣawwūr*) on our part of a thing according to its reality," or, "perception of a thing as it is."<sup>89</sup>

15. "Knowledge is the perception (*taṣawwūr*) by the soul of the distinctive characteristics (*rusūm*) of the objects known in its essence."<sup>90</sup> The pronoun "its" refers to "soul." Grammatically it could also refer to "distinctive characteristics" or "objects known," but then, the plural "essences" would be expected.

16. "Absolute knowledge is the soul's perception of the truths of things which are the objects of knowledge."<sup>91</sup>

17. "Knowledge is the perception (*taṣawwūr*) of things through thorough understanding (*taḥaqquq*) of quiddity and definition and apperception (*taṣdīq*) with regard to them through pure, verified (*muḥaqqaq*) certainty."<sup>92</sup>

18. "Knowledge is that which perception (*taṣawwūr*) and apperception (*taṣdīq*) teach (*afāda*)."<sup>93</sup>

19. "The intellect is the perceptions and apperceptions that arrive at the soul (or, "are attained by the soul") by natural endowment (*bi-l-fīṭrah*), whereas knowledge is that which arrives by acquisition (*iktisāb*)."<sup>94</sup>

20. "Knowledge is the verification (*taḥqīq*) in the mind (*adh-*

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Fakhr-ad-dīn ar-Rāzī, *Mubīn*, Ms. Aya Sofya 2384, fol. 80a. Al-Āmidī, *Abkār*, according to Ms. Aya Sofya 2167 (see above D-5), goes on to explain that "arrival in the soul of some concept" means "distinguishing (*tamyīz*) it in the soul from everything else."

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Ms. Esat Ef. 1918, fol. 3a.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. *Rasā'il Ikhwān aṣ-ṣafā'*, III, 360.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Nāṣir-i-Khosraw, according to Bertels, *Nasir-i Khosrow*, 234.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. *Rasā'il Ikhwān aṣ-ṣafā'*, IV, 123.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Ishāq al-Isrā'īlī, according to Altmann-Stern, *Isaac Israeli*, 54. The translation of Altmann and Stern has been reproduced here. It employs a somewhat different English terminology.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Maqāṣid*, II, 86.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Ibn Sab'īn, *Budd* (12), with added discussion, and *Ahd*.

<sup>94</sup> Quoted in the Istanbul Ms. Topkapusaray, Revan Kōşk 2042, fol. 4a. The manuscript contains a work by a certain Mu'ayyadzâdeh (?), apparently of quite recent date.

*dhihn*) of what is imagined (*mutakhayyal*) and perceived (*mutasawwar*).<sup>95</sup>

F. Knowledge is belief. This conception of knowledge, philosophical in origin, was basically Mu'tazilah doctrine, to be refuted by the argument that God could not be thought of as believing.<sup>96</sup> Aṣ-Ṣābūnī states flatly that it is an assault upon the concept of God's knowledge, since it requires Him to believe.<sup>97</sup> The implications and pitfalls of "belief" and *sukūn an-naḥs* (lit., "rest of the soul") are reviewed in great detail from the Mu'tazilah point of view in the twelfth part of 'Abd-al-Jabbār's *Mughnī*.

1. "Knowledge is the trust (*thiqah*) that the object known is as it is (*'alā mā huwa bih*)."<sup>98</sup>

2. "Knowledge is believing (*i'tiqād*) the thing (to be) as it is." Both *'alā mā huwa bih*<sup>99</sup> and *'alā mā huwa 'alayh*<sup>100</sup> are used.

3. "Knowledge is believing a thing (to be) as it is to one's own satisfaction (*ma'a sukūn an-naḥs ilayh*)," or, "while becoming oneself used to the object believed (*ma'a tawḥīn an-naḥs ilā l-mu'taqad*)."<sup>101</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Ibn Sab'īn, *Budd* (6).

<sup>96</sup> Cf. 'Abd-al-Qāhir, *Uṣūl*, 44.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. aṣ-Ṣābūnī, *Kifāyah*. At the same time, aṣ-Ṣābūnī also objects to the definitions G-5 and H-2 as implying that God has a seeing or moving heart.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. al-Āmidī, *Abkār*, fol. 3a; al-Ījī, *Mawāqif*; at-Tahānawī, 1058, l. 18. Abū Hilāl al-Askarī, *al-Furūq al-lughawīyah*, 63 (Cairo 1353), has "firmly believing" (*i'tiqād... 'alā sabīl ath-thiqah*).

<sup>99</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Mustasfā*, I, 17; al-Ījī, *Mawāqif*; at-Tahānawī. All these authors describe and discuss this definition as that of the Mu'tazilah. 'Abd-al-Qāhir, *Uṣūl*, 5, singles out al-Ka'bī. Cf., further, aṣ-Ṣābūnī, *Kifāyah*, and Ibn Sab'īn, *Budd* (14).

<sup>100</sup> Cf. al-Āmidī, *Abkār*, fol. 2 a, referring to it as the Mu'tazilah definition.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. 'Abd-al-Qāhir, *Uṣūl*, 5; Imām al-Haramayn, *Irshād*; al-Bazdawī; al-Āmidī, *Abkār*. They all mention that this is the Mu'tazilah definition. *Tawḥīn* appears in the Imām al-Haramayn. Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbār, below, p. 211.

According to al-Askarī, *Furūq*, 63, the presence of *sukūn an-naḥs* and *thalaj aṣ-ṣadr* "calmness, assuredness" turns "knowledge" into "certainty." "Certainty" appears paired with *thalaj* already in Prophetical traditions. For al-Kindī, "certainty" requires *sukūn al-fahm*, cf. *Rasā'il al-Kindī*, I, 171; Altmann-Stern, *Isaac Israeli*, 58. On *sukūn an-naḥs*, see also G. Vajda, in *REJ*, CXXVI (1967), 388 f. Cf. also below, p. 169.

The description of "knowledge" as "warranted belief" (cf. W. H. Werkmeister, *The Basis and Structure of Knowledge*, 3, New York and London, 1948), sounds similar to this Mu'tazilah definition, which, however, thinks of subjectively warranted, and not as the modern statement, of objectively warranted.

4. “Knowledge is believing a thing (to be) as it is, when it happens on the basis of necessity or proof.”<sup>102</sup>

5. “Knowledge, as well as cognition (*maʿrifah*), is believing a thing (to be) as it is, and certainty (*tayaqqun*) as well as the removal of any doubt concerning it.”<sup>103</sup>

6. “Knowledge is believing that a thing is so, coupled with the belief that it cannot possibly be not so.”<sup>104</sup>

7. “Knowledge is a definite (*jâzim*) belief that conforms to something that is necessary (*al-muṭâbiq li-mûjab*).”<sup>105</sup>

8. “Knowledge is definitive and firm (*thâbit*) belief that conforms to actuality (*al-muṭâbiq li-l-wâqiʿ*).”<sup>106</sup>

G. Knowledge is remembrance, imagination, an image, a vision, an opinion.

1. “Knowledge is merely remembering (*tadhkîr*, lit., being reminded).”<sup>107</sup> For *madhkîr*, see also above, D-10.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. al-Ashʿarî, *Maqâlât al-Islâmîyîn*, ed. H. Ritter, 523 (Istanbul and Leipzig 1929–30, reprinted Wiesbaden 1963, *Bibliotheca Islamica* 1), who has, “... through necessity or proof”; al-Âmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 2a. al-Ashʿarî reports on a discussion of al-Jubbâʿî. Cf. also ʿAbd-al-Qâhir, *Uṣûl*, 5.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Fîṣal*, V, 109. Ibn Ḥazm goes on to polemicize against the Ashʿarites in connection with this definition.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Ibn Sinâ, *Najâh*, 87 (Cairo 1367/1938), with added discussion (cf. Goichon, *Lexique*, 240); Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî. *Sharḥ al-Ishârât*, at-Tahânawî, 1060, ll. 1 f.

<sup>105</sup> This definition is ascribed to Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî in al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*, and at-Tahânawî, 1058, l. 20.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. *Mutamminât at-Taʿrifât al-Jurjânîyah*. Also at-Tahânawî, 1056, ll. 4 f.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Balinûs, *Sirr al-khalîqah*, Ms. Köprülü I, 872, fol. 174a. Contrast also below, p. 115, n. 2. There is no need to suggest correcting *tadhkîr* to *tadhakkur*. Ibn Bâjjah, *Fî n-naḥs*, refers to Socrates as having assumed that knowledge is remembrance (*yaḍaʿu l-ʿilma tadhakkuran*), cf. the Berlin Ms. Wetzstein, I, 87 (Catalogue Ahlwardt 5060), fol. 165a. The Berlin manuscript is presumed lost, but I do not think that when I copied this passage before World War II, I made a mistake and read “knowledge” when it should have been “learning” (*at-taʿallum*). The edition of Ibn Bâjjah’s work on the soul by M. Ş. H. al-Maʿşûmî, 144 (Damascus 1379/1960), which is based upon the manuscript in the Bodleian Library, has *at-taʿallum* in this connection. However, in spite of some similarity, the published text is entirely different from the one in the Berlin manuscript. The determination of learning (*taʿallum* = *mathêsis*) as remembrance (*tadhakkur* = *anamnêsis*) was, of course, widely known through the *Analytica Priora* 67a21 (Ar. Trans. in ʿAbd-ar-Raḥmân Badawî, *Manṭiq Aristû*, I, 289 [Cairo 1948–52]), from Plato, *Meno* 81D, cf., for instance, Ibn Sinâ, *Shifâʾ*, IV, 545 (*jumlâh* 1, *jann* 4, *maqâlah* 9, *faṣl* 19) (Cairo 1384/1964); Abû l-Barakât, *Muʿtabar*, I, 41.



2. "Knowledge is imagining (a phantom of, *khayāl*) the object known in the soul of the knower..."<sup>108</sup>

3. "Knowledge is not the perception (*taṣawwūr*) of the object known, and it is not the concept (*ma'nā*) that perceives the object known, for not every object known is perceived, and not every knower perceives. Perception comes to the knower only from his being one who uses imagination (*mutakhayyil*), and the form for the object known consists in its being in a condition seized by the imagination (*khayāl*). There are objects known not seized by the imagination at all. Consequently, they certainly have no form."<sup>109</sup>

4. "Knowledge is the opinion (*ra'y*) that falls firmly upon the essence (*kunh*) of the realities of things, so that it cannot be dislodged from it."<sup>110</sup>

5. "Knowledge is a vision (*ru'yah*) of the heart that is looked at."<sup>111</sup>

6. "There is no meaning to knowledge except that of its being an image (*mithāl*) that arrives in the soul, which conforms to that which is an image in sense perception, namely, the object known." Or: "Knowledge is an image that conforms to the object known, like a picture (*sūrah*) or sculpture (*naqsh*), which is the image of a thing."<sup>112</sup>

7. "Knowledge stands for the arrival (*ḥuṣūl*) of the image in the mirror... Likewise, the arrival (*wuṣūl*) of the image of the object known in the heart is called knowledge... Likewise, the arrival (*ḥuṣūl*) of an image that conforms to the reality of the object known in the heart is called knowledge."<sup>113</sup>

8. "Knowledge is the establishment of the image (*tamaththul*) of the quiddity of the object perceived (*mudrak*) in the soul of the perceiver (*mudrik*)."<sup>114</sup>

9. "Knowledge is the shadow (*ẓill*) and formation (*hay'ah*) of the object known..."<sup>115</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Ibn Sab'īn, *Budd* (16b), see below, p. 69, n. 4.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, I, 42. Also, Ibn 'Arabī, *Kutāb at-Tarājīm*, 11 (Hyderabad 1367/1948, in Vol. II of *Rasā'il Ibn 'Arabī*), and *Kutāb al-Masā'il*, 21 (also in Vol. II).

<sup>110</sup> Cf. at-Tawḥīdī, *Muqābasāt*, 305. At-Tawḥīdī maintains that he is relying upon the authority of an ancient scholar.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. aṣ-Ṣābūnī, *Kifāyah*. See above, p. 63, n. 3.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Mi'yār al-'ilm*, 76, also 312, 323, and *Maqāṣid*, I, 7.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā'*, III, 11. See also al-Ghazzālī, *Mustaṣfā*, I, 17 f., and Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, I, 45 and 91.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. al-Ījī, *Mawāqif*, and at-Tahānawī, 1056, l. 11, with added discussion, ascribing the definition to the philosophers.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Ibn Sab'īn, *Budd* (16a). Cf. below, p. 69, n. 4.

H. Knowledge is a motion.

1. “(Proclus, on the authority of Aristotle) called knowledge ‘motion’ (*ḥarakah*).”<sup>116</sup> However, in the *Sirr al-khalīqah* of Balīnūs,<sup>117</sup> it is said that “knowledge does not come about through a motion that is given a material form” (*bi-ḥarakah mujassadah*, or read, *mutajassidah* “that takes place in a body, in a corporeal form”?). The view that motion is not involved corresponds, it seems, more closely to the Aristotelian conception, cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 247b.<sup>118</sup>

2. “Knowledge is a motion of the heart.”<sup>119</sup>

I. Knowledge is a relative term. This Aristotelian idea (cf. *Categories* 6b35, Arabic trans., ed. ‘Abd-ar-Raḥmān Badawī, *Manṭiq Aristūl*, I, 23 [Cairo 1948–52]) underlies many of the definitions quoted previously in which knowledge is brought into relation with the object known and the knower, cf., in particular, A-14.

1. “Knowledge belongs to the category of relation (*mudāf*), because it is used in comparison (*bi-l-qiyās*) with the object known.” Also, “knowledge, which is the genus of the object known,<sup>120</sup> is said to belong to the category of relation, because it is a knowledge of the object known.”<sup>121</sup>

2. “Knowledge is the interdependence itself (*naḥs at-ta‘alluq*).”<sup>122</sup>

3. “Knowledge is a truth-related (*ḥaqīqīyah*) attribute that is characterized by interdependence (*dhāt ta‘alluq*).”<sup>123</sup>

J. Knowledge may be defined in relation to action. Aristotelianism claimed that “knowledge was the beginning of action, and action

<sup>116</sup> Cf. *Kutāb as-Sa‘ādah*, 58.

<sup>117</sup> Ms. Köprülü I, 872, fol. 197b.

<sup>118</sup> H. A. Wolfson, *Crescas Critique of Aristotle*, 548 (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), refers to Simplicius, *In Phys.* 1075, ll. 23 f. Diels.

<sup>119</sup> This statement is ascribed to an-Nazzām, cf. ‘Abd-al-Qāhir, *Uṣūl*, 6: al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, 403, where knowledge and ignorance are described as motions. Aṣ-Ṣābūnī, *Kifāyah*, adds, “because of an emotion (*wijḍān*) it feels.” Ash-Shahrastānī, 38, trans., I, 55, has the Nazzāmīyah speak of knowledge and will (both in the plural) as motions of the soul. Cf. H. A. Wolfson, in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem*, 367 (Jerusalem 1967).

<sup>120</sup> Read *al-ma‘lūm* (Ms. *al-‘ulūm*).

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Abū l-Faraj b. iṭ-Tayyib, *Commentary on the Categories*, in Ms. Cairo *ḥikmah* 1 m, fols. 157b, 161a, 170a. Cf. also, for instance, Abū l-Barakāt, *Mu‘tabar*, 1, 225, III, 2.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. at-Tahānawī, 1061, l. 4.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. at-Tahānawī, 1061, l. 23, who considers this a definition adopted by some Ash‘arites.

the entelechy of knowledge.” This aphorism was very well known in Islam and is frequently cited.<sup>124</sup> The inseparable character of knowledge and action was at the center of all Muslim ethics, both religious and philosophical.<sup>125</sup> In speculative theology, the relevance for God’s knowledge is considered foremost, although life and capability are inescapable conditions for human knowledge.

1. “Knowledge is that through whose existence he in whom it subsists is enabled to act in an orderly fashion and to act well.”<sup>126</sup>

2. “Knowledge is an attribute (*ṣifah*) whose existence does not make it impossible for him who is alive and capable (*al-hayy al-qādir*) to act well.”<sup>127</sup> Cf. K-1.

3. “Knowledge is the attribute (*wasf*) that enables him who possesses this attribute to act in an orderly fashion.”<sup>128</sup>

K. Knowledge is conceived as the negation of ignorance. This follows the practice of lexicographers wishing to avoid the definition of common terms whose meanings they consider self-evident. It does not explain anything, not even where it is expanded to include certain other elements.

1. “Knowledge is an attribute (*ṣifah*) through which ignorance, doubt, or conjecturing is removed from him who is alive.”<sup>129</sup> Cf. J-2.

L. Knowledge is the result of an intuition coming from outside or as the result of introspection. This category of definitions is meant to present examples of those proposed by mystics or holding a special appeal for them. In contrast to the other categories, this one has the material arranged according to the approximate

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Abū l-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī, as quoted in the Bodleian Ms. or. Marsh 539, fol. 124a Cf., further, Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. F. Rosenthal, II, 415, n. 10 (New York 1958, 1067); S. M. Stern, in *Journal of Semitic Studies*, VII (1962), 234–52.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. below, pp. 246 ff.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. al-ʿĀmidī, *Abkār*, fol. 2b, who refers to Ibn Fūrak. Al-Ījī, *Mawāqif*, has a somewhat abbreviated version, omitting “existence” and “to act well”, as does at-Tahānawī, 1058, ll. 8 f. The Imām al-Ḥaramayn, *Ishād*, combines this with the following definition as follows: “Knowledge is that which enables him who possesses the attribute of (knowledge) to act in an orderly fashion and to act well.”

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Ihkām*, I, 38. Ibn Ḥazm polemicalizes here against Ibn Fūrak, whom he does not mention by name.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Mustasfā*, I, 16, with added discussion. Cf. also ‘Abd-al-Qāhir, *Uṣūl*, 5.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. aṣ-Ṣābūnī, *Kifāyah*.

chronological sequence of the authors quoting a given definition. The building blocks of some of these definitions are obviously not in any way mystic in origin. This applies in particular to L-2 and 6 with their clear philosophical antecedents. And we have also seen already definitions mentioned by mystics such as Ibn 'Arabî which appear to fit much better in other categories, quite apart from some that reflect mystical terminology and thinking, although their reporters cannot be simply classified as Şûfis.

1. "Knowledge is the revelation (*tajallî*) of things themselves."<sup>130</sup> Note the use of the verb *tajallâ* in D-10.

2. "Knowledge is the falling of the soul's sight (*başar*) upon the universals."<sup>131</sup>

3. "Knowledge is a light thrust by God into the heart."<sup>132</sup> For the concept of knowledge as light, see below, pp. 155 ff.

4. "The knower is he whom God allows to witness (*ashhadahû*) His divinity and essence, while he is not (yet) possessed by a state (*hâl*). Knowledge is his state, but on condition that a distinction be made between it and gnosis (*ma'rifah*) and the gnostic (*ârif*)."<sup>133</sup>

5. "The arrival of the knowledge of a thing whatever it may be and its perfect cognition (*ma'rifah*) is based upon union (*ittiḥâd*) with the given object of knowledge, and union with a thing is based upon the cessation of everything whereby the knower is distinguished from the object known."<sup>134</sup>

6. "Knowledge is intuition (*badîhah*) as well as acquisition (*iktisâb*)."<sup>135</sup> This hardly qualifies as a "definition" of knowledge, although it is listed as such by Ibn Sab'în. The fact that Ibn Sab'în lists evident knowledge next to acquired knowledge in this fashion would seem to indicate that for him, the philosophical-theological assumption of the existence of such knowledge corresponded with the mystic's desire for divinely inspired knowledge.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhî, *Mas'alah fî l-farq bayn al-'ilm wa-l-fiqh*, as quoted by 'U. I. Yahyâ, in the introduction of his edition of al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhî's *Khatm al-awliyâ'*, 65 (Beirut 1965).

<sup>131</sup> Cf. *Kitâb as-Sa'âdah*, 58, where this definition is ascribed to Plato; Ibn Bukhtîshû', *Rawḍah*, 46.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, *Qût al-qulûb*, I, 197 (Cairo 1351/1932).

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Ibn 'Arabî, *Futûḥât*, II, 129; *Istilâḥ as-Şûfiyyah*, 15 (Hyderabad 1367/1948, in Vol. II of *Rasâ'il Ibn 'Arabî*).

<sup>134</sup> Cf. al-Qônawî, *an-Nafahât al-ilâhiyyah*, Ms. Bursa Ulu Cami 1669, (dated in the beginning of Dhû l-Hijjah 872/June 1468), fols. 16b–17a. See above, p. 50.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Ibn Sab'în, *Budd* (13).

7. "Knowledge is that which the soul desires."<sup>136</sup>

8. "Knowledge is the falling of the soul ('s sight)<sup>137</sup> upon that which is concealed deep inside it (*fī sirrihā*), and its stopping there and not coming out from it and leaving it."<sup>138</sup>

9. "Knowledge, is a secret (*sirr*) that is thrust into the soul. If it is applied to the discernment (*tamyīz*) of the existing things, the careful searcher of the object sought, who controls a thing entirely and comprehends the newly arising object of perception, its essence, and its substance absolutely, finds it..."<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Cf. Ibn Sab'īn, *Budd* (11).

<sup>137</sup> My copy of the text, omitting the words in brackets, may be faulty, cf. L-2.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Ibn Sab'īn, *Budd* (10).

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Ibn Sab'īn, *Budd* (16). This definition goes on to include G-2 and 9.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### KNOWLEDGE IS ISLAM (Theology and Religious Science)

#### 1. BOOKS AND CHAPTERS “ON KNOWLEDGE”

The root *‘l-m* occurs frequently in the literature concerned with the traditions of the Prophet. This fact is not surprising. It is confirmed by the many pages of references listed in *Concordance*, IV, 313a25–339b39. It is, perhaps, not surprising either, but not quite as expected, that some monographs on traditions on knowledge were soon written and that the collections of *ḥadīth*, which laid the foundations for the religio-legal complex of later Islam, came to include special chapters, or “books,” devoted to the topic of “knowledge.”

The great legal compilation of the Imam Mālik (b. ca. 91/710, d. 179/795) takes us back into the eighth century. The *Muwattaʿ*<sup>1</sup> contains a chapter on “the search after knowledge,” which occurs within the context of other moral prescriptions. It consists of only one tradition, or rather, wisdom saying, going back to Mālik himself, which quotes the pre-Islamic sage from the Qurʾān, Luqmān, as exhorting his son in these words: “Son, sit at the feet of the scholars and close to them, for God gives life to the hearts through the light of wisdom, like as He gives life to the dead soil through rain from heaven.”<sup>2</sup> This saying is quoted by later authors in a number of slightly different recensions.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mālik. *Muwattaʿ*, 1002 (Cairo 1370/1951): IV, 429 f. (Cairo 1355/1936), with the commentary of az-Zurqānī, which does not add anything of importance.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. al-Jāhīz, *Bayān*, ed. ʿAbd-as-Salām Ḥārūn. II, 149 (Cairo 1367–69/1948–50), where another long saying ascribed to Luqmān is similarly introduced; *Rasāʾil Ikhwān as-ṣafāʾ*, I, 272; al-Mubashshir, 265, II. 6 and 8, where similar remarks are ascribed to Luqmān, while the saying in the form it has in the *Muwattaʿ* appears on p. 272, 11 10 f., followed there by references—rare in al-Mubashshir—to Muslim conditions: ath-Thaʿlabī, *Qīṣaṣ-al-anbiyāʾ*, in the chapter on Luqmān, corresponding only to the first half of the saying; al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyāʾ*, I, 8, trans. N. A. Faris, 17; Ibn ʿAbd-al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ*, I, 106, quoting Mālik, on his authority and that of other scholars, with some slight distortion, in one place obviously due to the printer; az-Zamakhsharī, *Rabīʿ al-*

nothing can be said about its earlier history, except that it does not seem to occur in the related wisdom literature going under the name of Aḥiqar. It might very well have been derived from an old collection of wisdom sayings of non-Arab or Arab origin. It might even have been invented by Mâlik himself, although this would seem to be very unlikely. The absence from the *Muwattaʿa* of other and, from the Islamic point of view, more authoritative quotations is significant. It indicates that Mâlik was not aware of other relevant material that he might have considered worthy of inclusion in his work in this particular connection. There is no reason in the world why he should not have included it, had he known about it and thought it genuine and important. There was every reason to mention it. None of the material included in the chapters on *ʿilm* in later *ḥadīth* collections is referred to in Mâlik's chapter on *ʿilm*, a clear indication that the situation which led to the inclusion of that material had not yet reached the stage which suggested, if it did not demand, its inclusion. In Mâlik's generation, *ʿilm* apparently had not yet achieved the stage of a problem in traditionist religious thought and scholarly methodology.

Of the large *ḥadīth* collections only those which arrange their material topically, as against works arranged according to transmitters, are of interest to us here. The largest part of the earlier literature of this type preceding the six so-called "canonical" collections, has not yet been recovered or is known so far only in fragmentary fashion. The *Jāmiʿ* of the Egyptian jurist, ʿAbdallāh b. Wahb (b. 125/742–43, d. Shaʿbān 25, 197/May 1, 813), whose principal teacher had been the Imam Mâlik and who was supposedly nicknamed "Dīwān al-ʿilm" because of his vast knowledge,<sup>3</sup> included a "Book on Knowledge." This we learn from quotations in Ibn ʿAbd-al-Barr's *Jāmiʿ*. Ibn Wahb's *Kitāb id-ʿIlm* cited statements by Mâlik to the effect that "knowledge does not rest in the large amount of transmitted material, but it is a light that God has placed in the hearts of men," and that "knowledge and wisdom are a light by which God guides whomever He wishes;

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*abrār*, Istanbul Ms. Fatih 3894 (written in 857/1453), fol. 25b; Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, IV, 513; al-Ibshīhī, *Mustaṭraf*, I, 25. Al-Baṭalyawsī, *al-Inṣāf fī i-tanbīḥ ʿalā l-asbāb*, 78 (Cairo 1319), cites Luqmān's remark as an example for the metaphoric use of life and death for knowledge and ignorance (which, according to al-Baṭalyawsī, is one of thirteen such metaphoric uses of life and death).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, VI, 73 (Hyderabad 1325–27).

they are not the large number of problems.” Ibn Wahb also stated on Mâlik’s authority that “it is part of a man’s happiness to be blessed with being right and good, as it is part of his unhappiness not to cease making mistakes.” His *Kitâb al-ʿIlm* also featured the tradition warning against supposititious traditions: “He who ascribes to me something I did not say, let him take his deserved place in the Fire; he who gives misleading advice to his friend who asks him for advice cheats him; and the fault for (mistakes resulting from) a *fatwâ* given to someone without sufficient grounding in the subject rests with the one who gives it to him.”<sup>4</sup> The few complete books of Ibn Wahb’s *Jâmiʿ* that have been preserved and published<sup>5</sup> do not comprise the *Kitâb al-ʿIlm*. Thus, nothing definite can be said about the position it occupied within the work or about its contents.

Almost two generations after Mâlik, the great Shâfiʿî (150–204/767–820) wrote a special treatise on “The Sum Total of Knowledge” (*ʿImâʿ al-ʿilm*).<sup>6</sup> To ash-Shâfiʿî, “knowledge” meant the establish-

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ibn ʿAbd-al-Barr, *Jâmiʿ*, II, 25, 72, 115 f., and, without express reference to Ibn Wahb’s *Jâmiʿ*, I, 17 f. The first of the statements quoted above is quoted in Abû Nuʿaym, *Hilyah*, VI, 319, with other relevant statements. It is credited to ʿAbdallâh b. Masʿûd in al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâʾ*, I, 44, trans. N.A. Faris, 128, cf. also below, pp. 161 and 165; al-ʿAlmawî, *Muʿîd*, 30. The statement of Ibn Wahb on the authority of Mâlik: “Wisdom, I think, is insight (*fiqh*) into the religion of God.” is presumably derived from his *Jâmiʿ*. Many other quotations from Ibn Wahb in Ibn ʿAbd-al-Barr (*Jâmiʿ*, I, 135, 162, 190, II, 7, 11, 25, 32, 45, 52, 54, 58, 60, 80, 98, 123, 133–138, 141, 143, 140, 159, 165 f., 173 f.) may possibly go back to the *Kitâb al-ʿIlm* of Ibn Wahb’s *Jâmiʿ*. However, this remains uncertain. In one instance (Ibn ʿAbd-al-Barr, *Jâmiʿ*, II, 53 f.), the source is indicated to be Ibn Wahb’s *Kitâb al-Majâlis* (see below, p. 310, n. 5).

Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, *Qit*, I, 200, 11. 5 ff., quotes Ibn Wahb as follows: “The search for knowledge (*talab al-ʿilm*) was mentioned in Mâlik’s presence, and he said, ‘Searching for knowledge is good, and spreading knowledge is good, if it is done with the right intention, but look and find out what behooves you, from morn to night, and from night to morn, and do not give preference over that to anything.’”

For knowledge conceived as light, cf. below, ch. VI. Mâlik also speaks about “the light of knowledge” in a statement attributed to him to the effect that quarrelsomeness and disputation cause the light of knowledge to disappear, cf. Ibn Rajab, *Faḍl ʿilm as-salaf*, 22 (Cairo, n. y.). For knowledge conceived as guidance, cf. also al-Ibshîhî, *Mustatraf*, I, 28: “Knowledge is light and guidance. Ignorance is erring and perdition.”

<sup>5</sup> Ed. J. David-Weill (Cairo 1939–48, *Publications de l’Institut français d’archéol. or., textes arabes* 3–4), cf. *GAL*, 2nd ed., I, 163, *Suppl.*, I, 257; F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, I, 466 (Leiden 1967–).

<sup>6</sup> Included in ash-Shâfiʿî, *Umm*, VII, 250–62, but originally an independent work and known as such to later scholars. Cf. also below, p. 232.



ment of legal principles. It is embodied in the four fundamental sources of law upon which the legal system of Muslim jurists came to be based and which ash-Shâfi'î discusses here. The highly sophisticated character of the brief treatise leaves little doubt that the more elementary occupation of *ḥadīth* scholars with "knowledge" as they understood it preceded that of ash-Shâfi'î (and his predecessors in this respect in the legal field if there, were any), but the *Jimā' al-ilm* is the earliest genuine example so far known of a methodological discussion of "knowledge" in monograph form.<sup>7</sup>

The slightly younger Abû Khaythamah (b. 160/776–77. d. 234/849) wrote a *Musnad*, which is not preserved,<sup>8</sup> but he also wrote a monograph entitled *Kitāb al-Ilm* which is preserved and is of great importance; for the history of the treatment of knowledge by *ḥadīth* scholars.<sup>9</sup> Abû Khaythamah's *Kitāb al-Ilm* contains 163 traditions, a few of which are duplicates. One tradition is ascribed to Moses and was apparently included because the three questions Moses addresses to God include one about the best judge (*ahkam*) among men. Another tradition is ascribed to Jesus and is an almost literal quotation of the second half of Matthew 5:19. Quite a few of the traditions concern conditions or persons after the time of the Prophet. Most of them are ascribed to the first generation of Muslims. Less than a dozen go back to the Prophet himself. One of these is ascribed in one place to the Prophet, and in another to Ibn 'Abbās (nos. 25 and 17). While it is impossible to ascertain whether or not the material attributed to the Prophet goes in fact back to him, it is clear that the Prophetic authorship assumed for a large number of traditions dealing with "knowledge" in later times is the result of the process, worked out by J. Schacht for jurisprudence, of the attribution of traditions slowly working its way back in time.

There is no discernible order in Abû Khaythamah's arrangement

<sup>7</sup> The legal principles of the Ḥanbalite school were treated in a *Book on Knowledge* by al-Khallāl (d. 311/923, cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 311), according to Ibn Taymiyah, *al-Imān*, 333 (Damascus 1381/1961), a passage quoted in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., I, 274b. However, there seems to be some uncertainty as to the exact title of al-Khallāl's work.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ibn an-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel, 230, 1, 9 (Leipzig 1871–72) = 321, 1, 12 (Cairo 1348). For Abû Khaythamah, cf. Sezgin, I, 107; adh-Dhahabī, *Ibar*, ed. Ṣalāḥ-ad-dīn al-Munajjid, I, 416 (Kuwait 1960–66).

<sup>9</sup> Ed. M. Nāṣir-ad-dīn al-Albānī, in a collection entitled: *Min Kunūz as-sunnah: Rasā'il arba'*, 103–149 (Damascus, n.y. [1385]).

of his material. Occasionally, traditions going back to the same authority are grouped together, as in the case of Makhûl (nos. 41–44) or Masrûq (nos. 46–50). The purpose, however, of all the material brought together by Abû Khaythamah is evident. It is meant to show the superiority of “knowledge”, that is, of traditional information, over independent judgment (*raʾy*, *ijtihād*, *kalām*, *qiyās*) and to set forth the educational and methodological problems involved in the transmission of “knowledge.” The religious merit of knowledge and study is exalted. Scholars are praised highly. The real religious meaning of “knowledge” is indicated. The necessity of instruction, the process of instruction, the role of memorization versus written transmission, the reluctance required in expressing legal opinions the relationship of knowledge and action—all these matters, and many others, are dealt with in one or more traditions. It is clear at this point that the discussion of “knowledge” in traditionist thought served primarily educational ends. In fact, while at first slanted toward the needs of traditionist and legal education, the same principles were transferred later to Muslim education in general and are reflected in Muslim educational literature.<sup>10</sup> It also seems a likely assumption that the accumulation of material for the traditionist and legal discussion of “knowledge” in the educational and methodological sense had reached the stage where it warranted coherent presentation during the first half of the eighth century.

The same situation is, in a somewhat different way, also indicated in the important *Muṣannaf* of the Kûfan transmitter, Abû Bakr Ibn Abî Shaybah (b. 159/775–76, d. 235/849). Like Abû Khaythamah’s small monograph, the many volumes of the *Muṣannaf* do not deal exclusively with Prophetic traditions. The work includes throughout statements and opinions of early Muslims on a great variety of topics, and it pays considerable attention to such subjects as historical data, something we do not find in later *ḥadīth* collections. Ibn Abî Shaybah’s *Muṣannaf* may, in fact, be viewed as a literary form all its own which was discontinued when, on the one hand, *ḥadīth* works concentrated on the Prophet and religiously relevant information and, on the other, a vast accumulation of secular entertaining, morally edifying, and educational material made the composition of separate, quasi-secular *adab* works

<sup>10</sup> Cf. below, pp. 280 ff.

possible and desirable. Or, the *Muṣannaf* might have constituted an attempt to draw the ancient tradition of *adab* writing into the realm of religious scholarship. Characteristically, Ibn Abî Shaybah's concern with "knowledge" expresses itself within the framework of a "Book on *Adab*."<sup>11</sup> Well tucked away somewhere in the middle of the voluminous compilation, the chapter on *adab* is preceded by sections on medicine and dress. Ibn Abî Shaybah's treatment of "knowledge" reflects the greatly varied interests of *adab* authors and shows scant affinity to the approach of the collectors of *ḥadīth*. The "Book on *Adab*" begins with remarks on kindness and gentleness (*mā dhukira fī r-rifq wa-t-tū'adāh*) and continues with traditions concerning a great many other good or bad qualities of character and modes of behavior, such as the proper forms of greeting and so on. Considerable space is devoted to the attitude of the Prophet and the, early Muslims toward piety as an important component of *adab*. The part of the chapter dealing with *ilm* occupies only about, one-fifth of it and is, moreover, interspersed with paragraphs on such subjects as backgammon, chess, the game of "fourteen" (*arba'ata 'ashara* or, with its Persian name in an Arabicized form, *shahārdah*), and children's games. Among the subjects discussed we find studying (*talab al-'ilm*) and teaching, studying for the sake of gaining worldly esteem, and traveling in quest of knowledge. The "Book on *Adab*" is immediately followed by a brief "book" on traditional information set down in writing (*al-ḥadīth fī l-karārīs*).<sup>12</sup> It deals with opinions about the permissibility of or the dislike for the written fixation of "knowledge," but it also has a section on what a man must learn himself or teach his children. The problem of whether or not a teacher may accept payment for his services, incidentally, is treated elsewhere in the *Muṣannaf*.<sup>13</sup> The following "book" then deals with a legal

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the following Istanbul manuscripts of the *Muṣannaf*: Murad Molla 599 (according to the present numbering), containing the "Book on *Adab*" on fols. 166b–207a, with the sections on knowledge appearing on fols. 199b–207a, and the *Kitāb al-Ḥadīth fī l-karārīs* on fols. 207a–226b (fols. 137a–292b of the manuscript were, it seems, written in the fourteenth century; the rest is dated in 1094/1683); Nuru Osmaniye 1219 (dated in 1088/1677), fols. 48b–76a (71a–76a) and 76b–89a; Topkapusaray Ahmet III 498, Vol. 5 (Catalogue Karatay-Reşer 2563), fols. 171a–210a and 210a–227a.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Concordance*, V, 559a3–5; Abū Khaythamah, no. 93 (?).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ms. Köprülü, I, 442, fols. 186b–188a; Topkapusaray Ahmet III 498, Vol. 4, fol. 270.

subject, the payment of blood money (*diyât*). No order is readily discernible in Ibn Abî Shaybah's arrangement of topics concerning knowledge, most certainly because there was none. The view that a coherent discussion of "knowledge" could serve as a suitable and, indeed, necessary foundation and introduction for a work on religious traditions was apparently still too new, and the *adab* outlook of the *Muṣannaf* militated against imitating the *ḥadīth* scholars' preoccupation with methods for the defense and preservation of their "knowledge."

The situation is already different in the *ḥadīth* work of ad-Dârimî (181–235/797–865) who represents the next generation. Ad-Dârimî's compilation does not contain what could be called a special "book" on *ilm*. However, a large part of its introduction is given over to individual chapters (*bâb*) that discuss various aspects of *ilm* as illustrated by statements of the Prophet and, mostly, other early Muslim authorities.<sup>14</sup> Beginning with a discussion of the excellence of the Prophet, ad-Dârimî soon leads over to his proper subject, the Prophetical traditions and their transmission. It is in this connection that he speaks, among other matters, about such subjects as the recommendable imitation of scholars, the threatening danger of a disappearance of "knowledge," or the need of acting in accordance with one's knowledge and its approved use. He speaks of the tradition that "knowledge is fear and piety," of the importance of the right intent and the blame-worthiness of seeking knowledge not for the sake of God, of the equal treatment due to all students of traditional knowledge, and of the honor that belongs to scholars. Then, he goes into the problems of the transmission of traditional knowledge and whether or not its fixation in writing is permissible. He includes a chapter on traveling in quest of knowledge and on the appropriate behavior that preserves the dignity of knowledge, on the interpretation and the discussion and study of traditions and their use for rendering legal decisions, and the like. He concludes his discussion of *ilm* with a chapter illustrating the reverence due to knowledge. More in the *adab* tradition than in that of austere *ḥadīth* scholarship, this chapter consists of three rather lengthy sermons expounding the wisdom of true religious scholars who teach the right ethical approach toward life, including an epistle by the eighth-century

<sup>14</sup> I used the Istanbul Ms. Reiselküttap 257, fols. 18b–43a.

Abû 'Utbah 'Abbâd b. 'Abbâd al-Khawwâs<sup>15</sup> that begins with a praise of intelligence (*aql*). This constitutes the end of ad-Dârimî's general introduction. Ad-Dârimî clearly anticipates the development that led to the introductory "book on knowledge." While he still appears to be undecided as to the overall and systematic importance of the concept, he is, to our knowledge, the first author of one of the large *ḥadīth* collections to use the discussion of "knowledge" as a general introduction.

A quotation from a *Kitāb al-Ma'rifah* by al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Ḥalwânî (d. 242/857) suggests that, in spite of the use of the word *ma'rifah*,<sup>16</sup> al-Ḥalwânî's treatise was in fact also a traditionist study of knowledge, but another quotation seems to indicate a wider range of topics.<sup>17</sup> A *Kitāb Jâmi' al-'ilm* by an early Shī'ah author, al-Ḥuṣayn b. Mukhâriq as-Salûlî, who lived in the ninth century, may also have dealt with knowledge after the manner and in the spirit of *ḥadīth* scholars.<sup>18</sup> A title credited to the founder of the Zâhirî school, Dâwûd b. 'Alī (b. ca. 815, d. 270/884): "Traditions that make knowledge necessary" (*Kitāb al-Khabar al-mûjib li-l-'ilm*), should presumably be corrected to... *li-l-'amal* and translated "...that require acting (in accordance with them)."<sup>19</sup> It is also by no means certain that *'ilm* in the title of a work by Ibn Abî Sarḥ, who wrote in 274/887: "Book on Knowledge and what has been mentioned about it," is the correct reading. If it is, the work may have dealt with the merits of knowledge in a secular sense and thus have stood close to the beginnings of a long chain of literary effusions in praise of knowledge.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Sezgin, I, 519, where, however, 'Abhâd b. 'Abbâd is wrongly identified with the person mentioned by Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, V, 95. Like ad-Dârimî's 'Abbâd b. 'Abbâd, the one mentioned by Sezgin is listed by Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, V, 97.

<sup>16</sup> For the frequent occurrence of *ma'rifah* in the titles of early Shī'ah and Mu'tazilah works, cf. below, pp. 146 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi'*, I, 85; also I, 89, 102, II, 80, where no title is indicated, as against Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bârî*, VI, 384 (Cairo 1378/1959). For al-Ḥalwânî, cf. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, II, 302 f., where he is mentioned as the author of a *sunan* work. The *Kitāb al-Ma'rifah wa-l-yagîn* by the famous Mâlikite Ibn Abi Zayd, which is listed in Ibn Farḥûn, *Dibâġ*, 137 (Cairo 1351), would seem to have been a work on theology, dealing with the acquisition of certainty in the knowledge about God.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 192, I, 21 = 272, I, 21; at-Tûsî, *Fihrist*, 82 f. (Najaf 1380/1961). Ibn Mukhâriq's lifetime is approximately fixed by the *isnâd* mentioned in at-Tûsî.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 217, II, 13 f. = 305, II, 4 f.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 128, I, 5 = 182, II, 2f.; J. A. Bellamy, in *JAOs*, LXXXI (1961), 226. Cf. also below, p. 279.

No chapter on knowledge expressly so designated appears in two of the six so-called authoritative collections of traditions, those of Ibn Mâjah and an-Nasâ'î, as will be discussed later. The other four do have "books" on knowledge of some length. They show some variety not so much in their contents as in the emphasis they place on the material they report. The oldest of the six, and the most influential, al-Bukhârî (194–256/810–870), made another change which proved to be very effective. He transposed the "book on knowledge" from its relatively obscure position in the middle of the work to near the beginning. Al-Bukhârî starts out by dealing with a historical subject that can claim pride of place both as to time and as to importance, that is, the beginnings of the Prophet's divine mission. As al-Bukhârî's commentators were quick to point out, this serves as a sort of perfunctory introduction and cannot be considered a regular "book" of the work. Next, al-Bukhârî devotes a "book" to the subject of "faith" (*îmân*). It is true faith which justifies and, indeed, demands the composition of works on the traditions of the Prophet with all that goes with them. After the discussion of faith, and before he goes into the detailed exposition of all Muslim religious duties, al-Bukhârî presents his *Kitâb al-ilm*. Its position indicates that in the author's view, the subject of "knowledge" is as basic as, or more so than, the beginnings of Muhammad's mission and true faith. A look at the contents of his "book on knowledge" clearly shows why he considered this to be so. On the surface, the material of the "book" seems to be chosen rather arbitrarily, and its arrangement to be quite unsystematic. However, this is in a way deceptive, as the following analysis of the contents shows:<sup>21</sup>

1. A chapter heading only, referring to Qur'ân 58:11/12 (cf. 2: 234/234, etc.) as well as 20:114/113, in praise of knowledge and its importance.

2. The method to be followed in communicating religious information: A story of the Prophet to the effect that he did not interrupt the discussion he was engaged in when he was asked some other question.—A story about speaking loudly while exhorting people to fulfill their religious duties or risk damnation.—

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<sup>21</sup> I used the text of al-Bukhârî's *Ṣaḥîḥ* with the commentaries of Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bârî*, I, 149–241; al-'Aynî, *Umdat al-qârî*, I, 379–641; and al-Qasṭallânî, *Irshâd as-sâri*, I, 178–261. The numbering of topics in al-Bukhârî and the other *ḥadîth* collections, as it appears here, has been supplied by me.

On the choice of the most appropriate expressions (such as "he told us," etc.) to introduce a tradition.—A parable comparing Muslims to a tree that does not shed its leaves; the same parable is used to make the point that it is good pedagogical practice not to explain the solution of a problem right away but to ask the listeners first whether they are able to find the solution by themselves, in order to test their knowledge.

3. A chapter heading only, referring again to Qur'ân 20:114/113.

4. On the various possible methods of studying: Reading to a teacher; listening to him (this includes the famous story of people listening while a Bedouin questions the Prophet about the essentials of Islam); and, on the basis of 'Uthmân's sending out of written copies of the Qur'ân and of the Prophet's writing of letters on various occasions, writing down traditions and transmitting them when knowledge of them was acquired through written material (the chapter heading uses the technical term *munâwalah* used for this procedure in the science of *ḥadīth*).—A story illustrating the proper selection of his seat by a student who comes to class when it is already in session.—Those attending a session are required to inform those who did not about what went on in class, even if the latter know the material better in the first place.

5. A chapter heading only, referring to Qur'ân 47:19/21 (the *shahādah*) and 35:28/25 (the scholars' particular reverence for God), etc.—Traditions indicating the precedence of knowing over speaking; scholars being the heirs of the prophets; the search for knowledge opening up the road to Paradise; God giving insight (*faqqaḥa*) into religious matters to those whom He likes; knowledge being attained only through study; Ibn 'Abbās interpreting the word *rabbāniyūn* as those who educate (*yurabbū*) people first in less important matters, and then in the more important ones. The last statement is expanded by references to the need for a skilful spacing of exhortations; they should not be given too frequently, nor should they be too frightening. Similarly, the tradition that God gives insight into religious matters to those whom He likes is to be understood in the sense that individuals are given such insight in different degrees, for the spiritual well-being of the community. Some individuals are quicker than others in understanding. This is illustrated again by the parable referred to under 2.

6. Statements in praise of knowledge by the caliph 'Umar, recommending that a person gain knowledge (*f-q-h*) before he is

to assume leadership, and by Muḥammad to the effect that two persons are to be envied, the person who is given property by God and is enabled to spend it wisely, and the person who is given wisdom by God and renders judgment by it (*yaqḍi biḥā*)<sup>22</sup> and teaches it to others.

7. Statements on the necessity of studying are found in Qur'ân 18:66/65 with the story of Mûsâ and al-Khiḍr, which also illustrates the need for traveling long distances in quest of knowledge, and in the tradition: "God, teach him the Book," which proves the necessity of teaching the Qur'ân. It is necessary to start out studying at a very young age. The Prophet does not mind when 'Abdallâh b. al-'Abbâs joins the prayer at an age just approaching puberty. The Prophet spits a little water upon a five-year old.—The need for knowing and teaching is illustrated by the Prophet's comparison of the right guidance and knowledge given him by God for his Prophetic mission with plentiful rain falling upon good soil and creating fertility, and falling upon depressed ground and being of no use.

8. One of the signs of the Hour is the disappearance of knowledge.

9. The Prophet dreams of drinking milk (*laban*) and passing the vessel from which he is drinking on to 'Umar. This refers to knowledge and its transmission.

10. Instances of situations in which religious information can be communicated, and of the ways and means of communicating religious information: Stories illustrating the necessity of communicating religious knowledge and of traveling in order to obtain it; the possibility of sharing information with a fellow-student; the need for the teacher to exercise restraint when he gets angry under questioning; and the recommendable procedure of frequent repetition in teaching. The Prophet repeated every *salâm* or remark (cf. above, under 2) three times.

11. The permissibility of giving instruction to women: The Prophet speaks of the three kinds of persons who can expect to receive a twofold reward. Among them is the person who gives a good education to his maidservant, then manumits and marries her.—The Prophet himself exhorted women.

12. Muslims ought to prove themselves eager to study traditions.

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<sup>22</sup> This is the translation suggested by the commentators, but since al-Bukhârî makes little of the relevance of *ḥadīth* to jurisprudence in this chapter, he may have conceived here of the phrase in a more general way.



This is illustrated by the Prophet's praise for Abû Hurayrah's eagerness in inquiring about the person most deserving of the Prophet's intercession on the Day of Resurrection.

13. Knowledge will not be taken away from mankind, but scholars will disappear. When no scholar remains, stupid men will be put in command. They will go astray themselves as well as lead others astray.

14. The need for regular and constant instruction: The Prophet set aside one particular day for the exhortation of women.—'Ā'ishah's example shows that it is necessary to consult an authority repeatedly about a matter, until one understands it fully.—The students who were in attendance must inform those who were not (cf. above, under 4).

15. Famous statements warning against the falsification of traditions: "Do not ascribe falsehoods to me," and "He who ascribes falsehoods to me intentionally, let him take his deserved place in the Fire." There are several, slightly different recensions.

16. Stories that have nothing to do with *ilm*, except that they mention the writing down of religious information and thus have relevance to the process of instruction.

17. It is recommendable to study even at unusual hours: The Prophet woke up in the night and had his household awakened in order to exhort them.—The Prophet prayed and exhorted people after nightfall.

18. The great number of existing traditions calls for good memories. Abû Hurayrah was cured of forgetfulness by the Prophet personally, so that he was able thereafter to boast of his tremendous knowledge of traditions.

19. The required behavior of teachers and students in class: The Prophet gives orders that people be kept quiet and be forced to listen.—Nobody should claim that he knows best. This ought to be left to God, as illustrated again by the story of Mûsâ and al-Khiḍr.—The Prophet was addressed by a man who was standing while he himself was sitting, and had to look up to the questioner.—Religious information may be imparted even while throwing pebbles at Minâ.—Even obnoxious questioners may be tolerated, as illustrated in the questioning of the Prophet by the Jews and his forbearance (Qur'ân 17:85/87).

20. Not all religious information is to be communicated to everybody, because it may be misunderstood and cause harm.

The Prophet entrusted some of his secret ideas to ‘Ā’ishah. She revealed one that concerned the Ka’bah to ‘Abdallāh b. az-Zubayr.—‘Alī said: “Tell people only what they understand, so that they will not ascribe falsehoods to God and His Prophet.”—The Prophet himself recommended keeping secret his statement that the *shahādah* protects those who pronounce it from Hell and that the avoidance of polytheism (*shirk*) guarantees Paradise. His purpose was to prevent people from relying upon it and using it as a pretext for omitting to do good deeds.

21. Bashfulness (*hayā’*) belongs to knowledge. Muǧāhid, however, said that neither a bashful nor a haughty person was able to acquire knowledge. On the other hand, ‘Ā’ishah stated that their natural bashfulness did not prevent women from getting insight (*tafaqqaha*) into religious matters (cf. above, under 5). Again, the parable of the tree (cf. above, under 2) is quoted to show that it was young Ibn al-‘Abbās’ bashfulness that prevented him from coming out with the right answer on a certain occasion.—If a man is bashful, as was ‘Alī with regard to a sexual problem he had, someone else may be asked to go and elicit the information required.

22. Religious information, such as the question as to where to put on the *iḥrām* upon approaching the holy territory, may be inquired about in a mosque.

23. In reply to a question as to how the *muḥrim* must dress, the Prophet went at length into what he must *not* wear, etc. This proves the teacher’s freedom to handle problems put to him as he sees fit.

A rather clear picture emerges from the preceding analysis of the contents of al-Bukhārī’s chapter on knowledge. It could hardly be expected that the arrangement adopted by the author would be a strictly systematic one. However, one easily notices the definite purpose behind the choice and arrangement of the material which gives the chapter a considerable degree of unity. Al-Bukhārī discusses the procedures to be followed by the teacher of “knowledge,” that is, traditional religious information, and those to be followed by the student. At the end of the entire “book,” he refers again to the behavior of both teacher and student during instruction, to the quality of bashfulness in students, and to the liberty of teachers to teach whatever they consider necessary and appropriate in a given situation. In between, the author, interspersing

his discussion with the customary praise of knowledge, dwells on the need for knowledge and instruction. He stresses the urgency of that need by citing the Prophet to the effect that the disappearance of knowledge and of scholars will herald the end of the world, and by referring to the existence of that need even under the most unusual circumstances, even for women, even at odd hours. A correlate of the urgent need for knowledge and the instruction in it is the necessity to avoid wrong teachings and the instruction in matters for which the student may be unprepared. Al-Bukhârî is concerned with justifying his meticulous and detailed approach to the study of *ḥadīth*. An exposition of scholarly methodology seemed to him the proper way of doing it. His "Book on Knowledge" comes after the discussion of the theological problem of "faith," but it was not meant to deal with "knowledge" in any theological sense. As a matter of fact, the term *ʿilm* occurs rather infrequently in the text itself of the traditions reported. It occurs frequently elsewhere in the chapter and, in particular, in the chapter headings, which are very helpful in explaining why a particular story or tradition has been mentioned in the context. Without them, we would often be at a loss as to the relevance of the material cited to the subject of "knowledge." A late commentator on al-Būkhârî's work, al-ʿAynî, states correctly that "the Book on Knowledge deals with the explanation of what is connected with knowledge, and not with the explanation of the essence of knowledge, because the study of the essences and real meanings (*ḥaqāʾiq*) of things forms no part of the work."<sup>23</sup> It is understood throughout that "knowledge" is exclusively religious knowledge. More particularly, it is the discipline to which the work is devoted, that is, the scholarly investigation of Prophetic traditions. The philosophical or theological concern with the meaning of knowledge does not enter al-Bukhârî's "Book on Knowledge." It is, as we have seen, an exposition of the most suitable method of higher education.

Turning now to Abû Dâwûd (202–275/817–889)—it is difficult and, perhaps, not very important to decide upon the exact chronological sequence, but Abû Dâwûd may have been slightly older than the following Muslim although he survived him by more than a decade—, we encounter a considerable difference in emphasis.

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<sup>23</sup> Al-ʿAynî, *ʿUmdat al-qārī*, I, 379. Cf. also Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bārī*, I, 149, who includes a reference to Abû Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabî and his general attitude toward *ʿilm* as cited above, pp. 50 f.

Abû Dâwûd's "Book on Knowledge" still occupies an inconspicuous position within the body of the work. The subject of "knowledge" is thus characterized as just one of the various procedures requiring guidance from precedents set by the Prophet. However, it follows directly upon the book dealing with the judiciary, which is the most important part of the Islamic religious structure. Abû Dâwûd's "Book on Knowledge" can be briefly analyzed as follows:<sup>24</sup>

1. Statements in praise of knowledge: The search for knowledge opens up a road to Paradise; scholars are more excellent than pious worshipers to the same degree in which the full moon is more excellent than all the other stars; scholars are the heirs of the prophets, leaving behind them not money but knowledge, etc.

2. Information given by non-Muslims is to be accepted but without comment as to its truth or falseness.

3. The written fixation of religious information: The Prophet permitted his speech during the last pilgrimage to be written down, and he also said, "Write it down, for truly, only what is true comes forth from my mouth." But he is also said to have forbidden expressly that any such information be set down in writing.

4. Against falsifying traditions: "He who ascribes falsehoods to me intentionally, let him take his deserved place in the Fire."—The use of "opinion" (that is, the use of other than traditional information) with regard to the Qur'ân is always a mistake.

5. The necessity, method, and extent of instruction: The Prophet repeated each of his statements three times, thereby indicating the need for repetition as an educational device. He did so slowly and deliberately, without any undue haste.—No tricky questions are allowed,<sup>25</sup> and it would be wrong to put someone in a position where religious knowledge is required and to ask him questions, if it is known that he does not possess the necessary knowledge to answer them. On the other hand, the knowledge one possesses must be passed on ("He who is asked about a religious problem [*ilm*] and conceals the answer will be bridled with a bridle of fire on the Day of Resurrection"). The transmission of religious knowledge is a necessary and continuous process to be undertaken even by those

<sup>24</sup> The editions of the *Sunan*, III, 234–41, also III, 432–41 (Cairo 1369/1950), and the commentary by al-Khaṭṭābī, *Ma'ālim as-sunnaḥ*, IV, 182–88 (Cairo 1352/1934), have been consulted.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. below, p. 255.

who are no religious scholars in their own right and who may happen to transmit their information to men who are actually better informed than they themselves. “That one man obtains right guidance through you, is better for you than red camels.”—The transmission of religious information on the authority of Israelites is not objectionable. In fact, the Prophet did this on one occasion throughout the night.

6. The study of religious information for any kind of worldly advancement is detrimental to the student. He who does so, “will not be able to smell the perfume of Paradise on the Day of Resurrection.”—Only a man in a position of command, or someone ordered to do so, or a conceited individual<sup>26</sup> would undertake to be a *qāṣṣ* to speak about religious matters in public. However, the Prophet himself once joined a group of ragged strangers and listened together with them to a Qur’ân reader. Although he was the recipient of the divine revelation, he liked to have someone else read the Qur’ân to him.

As in al-Bukhârî, we find here the same preoccupation with the ways and means of the transmission of traditions. The presentation, however, is much less systematic. There are fewer details, and much greater value is attached to the idea of religious merit. In a way, *‘ilm* is the science of traditions for Abû Dâwûd, too, as is to be expected. Yet, Abû Dâwûd did not feel compelled to consider the methodological aspects of the acquisition and transmission of knowledge for their own sake. He seems to be much more concerned with the moral values to be found in it.

The situation is totally different in the *Ṣaḥîḥ* of Muslim (b. ca. 202/817 or 206/821, d. 261/875). A few Prophetic traditions considered as somehow belonging together have been labeled in the *Ṣaḥîḥ* as its “Book on Knowledge.” It is a brief chapter. It follows upon the discussion of a theological subject, the problem of predestination (*qadar*). However, Muslim does not view *‘ilm* as a theological term, nor does he deal with it as a peg on which to hang the methodology of scholarship. The information he gives shapes up as follows:<sup>27</sup>

1. On the occupation with the Qur’ân: As shown by Qur’ân

<sup>26</sup> For a Ṣūfî interpretation of the meaning of *amîr*, *ma’mûr*, and *murâ’i* in this tradition, cf. Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, *Qût*, I, 195 f.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Muslim, *Ṣaḥîḥ*, II, 579–84 (Calcutta 1265/1849), with the commentary by an-Nawawî, *Minhâj*, V, 283–88 (Bûlâq 1283).

3:7/5, the Prophet expressed disapproval of any occupation with the “ambiguous” verses of the Qur’ân. He expressed anger at and disapproval of dissension in the interpretation of the Qur’ân. Quite generally, he disliked contentiousness. (All this clearly refers to the Qur’ân as such and is not meant to apply to religious information in general).

2. On the occupation with Prophetic traditions: The laws and customs (*sunan*) of the forefathers must be followed inch by inch even to the extent of, say, following them into a lizard’s hole, were they to enter one, and even if those forefathers were Jews or Christians or what not. The Prophet said that quibblers would come to a bad end. He repeated the words three times. (The “quibblers” here are not to be identified with those students who put tricky to their teachers, as mentioned by Abû Dâwûd. Further more, Muslim did not have in mind the necessity of repetition in the teaching process when he let the Prophet condemn the “quibblers” three times. The threefold repetition is mentioned here merely for emphasis.)

3. Various recensions of the traditions that the disappearance of knowledge is one of the signs of the approach of the Hour; that knowledge will be taken away when the Time draws near; and that it is not knowledge as such that will be taken away, but the scholars will disappear and be replaced by stupid men.

4. The establishment of good precedents, as, for instance, with regard to generosity in giving charity to the poor, or the promotion of ways of right guidance assure a divine reward for the originator of such precedents, when the good precedent he established is followed by others. Divine punishment, conversely, will hit the originators of bad precedents.

It is clear that in his chapter on knowledge, Muslim did not intend to do more than stress the role of “knowledge” in the proper interpretation of the Qur’ân and in the proper evaluation of the high esteem to be accorded to the *sunnah* of the Prophet. Knowledge is also praised perfunctorily as a religious term. In view of the fact that Muslim wrote at a time when a discussion of the methodology of “knowledge” was recognized as an intrinsic part of the science of *ḥadīth*, it is astonishing that so very little was made by him of the subject.

The approach of at-Tirmidhî (d. 279/892), again, is rather different. In the context of his “Book on Knowledge,” at-Tirmidhî

understood "knowledge" as referring exclusively to the science of traditions. He discussed all the material that offered hints as to the methods to be followed in this discipline, but his main purpose was to underline and exalt its importance. The position of his chapter on knowledge within his work characterizes "knowledge" as but one of the many religious duties and functions, even though, as in al-Bukhârî, it is preceded by the chapter on faith. Since at-Tirmidhî placed "knowledge" next to "faith," he considered probably both concepts as belonging somehow together and as rating about equally on his scale of religious values. However, the "faith" he was speaking about was not a theological problem of the first rank. Rather, in his view, "faith" was to be considered a minor accessory to the performance of religious duties, and "knowledge," consequently, was for him a similarly restricted subject. At-Tirmidhî's "Book on Knowledge" has grown to rather large proportions:<sup>28</sup>

1. "God gives insight into religious matters to those whom He likes."

2. On the search for knowledge: "It opens up a road to Paradise;" "The person in quest of knowledge is on the path of God until he returns;" "It is an expiation for past deeds."

3. On the necessity to pass on religious information to others: He who does not do so will be bridled with a bridle of fire on the Day of Resurrection; visiting students should be received with kindness.

4. The knowledge will not be taken away, but scholars will disappear and be replaced by stupid men. A continuation of the mere outward performance of religious duties, such as reciting the Qur'ân, does not mean that knowledge may not be on its way toward disappearance. A first sign of the disappearance of knowledge is the disappearance of humility.

5. Those who seek knowledge for any kind of worldly advancement will go to Hell.

6. A person must transmit to others religious information he has received, even if the person to whom he communicates it possesses greater knowledge than he does. The Prophet blessed someone who heard him make a statement, learned it by heart, and passed it on to others.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. at-Tirmidhî, *Ṣaḥîḥ*, 435–42 (Delhi 1266), with the commentary by Ibn al-ʿArabî, *ʿAridat al-aḥwadhî*, X, 113–59.

7. “He who ascribes falsehoods to me intentionally, let him take his deserved place in the Fire,” with variations which make it plain that this tradition refers to lying transmitters of *ḥadīth*.

8. Disapproval was expressed of someone who refused to listen to traditions because he felt that the Qur’ân contained all the necessary information.

9. Writing down traditions: The Prophet refused permission to do so when he was asked for it, but someone who complained of being unable to remember all the traditions he had heard from the Prophet was told, “Use your right hand.” The Prophet also gave orders for (his speech in Mecca) to be written down. Abû Hurayrah admitted that ‘Abdallâh b. ‘Amr (b. al-Âṣ)<sup>29</sup> knew more traditions than he, because he wrote them down, whereas he did not do so.

10. There is no harm in transmitting information on the authority of the Israelites. This is coupled with a repetition of the statement that those who ascribe falsehoods to the Prophet intentionally will take their deserved place in the Fire.

11. Great value and religious merit are to be found in establishing good precedents in general, and in finding out about the *sunnaḥ* of the Prophet in particular. Conversely, the establishment of bad precedents is blameworthy. “He who points to what is good is like the one who does good.” A number of stories illustrating this proposition. It is commendable to hold on to the precedents (*sunnaḥ*) set by the Prophet and by the first four caliphs, as well as to avoid innovations. The Prophet warned against taking a critical attitude toward traditions: “Leave me as I left you. If I tell you a *ḥadīth*, accept it on my authority. Those before you perished because of too much questioning and too much disagreement with their prophets.”

12. Statements in praise of the representatives of religious learning: “The scholar of Medina,” that is, Mâlik, is the greatest source of *ḥadīth*.—“A religious scholar (*faqīḥ*) causes more annoyance to Satan than a thousand pious worshipers.”—An extended version of the tradition mentioned above under 2, as well as in Abû Dâwûd under 1.—An impious hypocrite (*munâfiq*) is devoid of the combination of two qualities, namely, good behavior and the knowledge of religious matters (*fiqh fī d-dīn*).—“Scholars are more excellent than pious worshipers to the same degree in

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Sezgin, I, 84. His death is to be placed between 63/683 and 77/696.



which I am more excellent than the lowest among you.”—“God and the angels, down to the ant in her hole and down to the fish, pray for those who teach mankind what is good.”—“A scholar who acts (in accordance with his knowledge) and teaches is called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”<sup>30</sup>—No believer can learn enough of beneficial religious information until he reaches Paradise.—“The wise saw is the stray beast of the Muslim. Whenever he finds it, he is fully entitled to keep it.”<sup>31</sup>

Ibn Mâjah (209–273/824–887) does not have a “Book on Knowledge” expressly so designated in his *Sunan*.<sup>32</sup> In its place, he has a rather lengthy introduction at the beginning of the work which is intended to bring out the importance of the *sunnah* of the Prophet as well as the importance of its transmission and its observation, in about the manner of at-Tirmidhi. Ibn Mâjah also discusses some of the men concerned with the transmission of traditions. Moreover, he includes chapters on predestination and faith. He adds traditions on the merit of studying and teaching the Qur’ân and on traveling in quest of knowledge. Of the six “authoritative” collections, only Ibn Mâjah’s *Sunan* mentions the famous tradition that “seeking knowledge is a religious duty (*farîdah*) for every Muslim. He who puts knowledge before those unprepared for it is like one who puts a necklace of precious stones and pearls and gold on swine.”<sup>33</sup> Ibn Mâjah concludes his remarks with a statement on the

<sup>30</sup> This, again, is a quotation of Matthew 5:19, cf. Abû Khaythamah, above, p. 73, and below, p. 246.

<sup>31</sup> For a different version on “knowledge being the stray beast of the Muslim”. cf. also Abû Khaythamah, no. 157. Ibn al-‘Arabî’s commentary goes on here with remarks on the traditions about story-telling (*qaṣaṣ*), found at the end of Abû Dâwûd (above, p. 85).

<sup>32</sup> Ed. M. Fu’âd ‘Abd-al-Bâqî, 3–98 (Cairo 1372/1052).

<sup>33</sup> By consulting the *Concordance*, it can be easily verified today that Ibn Mâjah is the only one of the six to quote this *ḥadīth* with its scriptural overtones. In medieval times, this required a *fatwâ*, cf. Taqî-ad-dîn as-Subkî, *Fatâwî*, II, 545 (Cairo 1355–56). The first part of the tradition is at times coupled with another tradition as famous as it is spurious: “Seek knowledge, even if it be (as far away) as China.” Cf., for instance, Abû Ṭâlib al-Makkî, *Qūt*, I, 191–94 (below, p. 182); al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ’*, I, 13 ff., trans. N. A. Faris, 30 ff.; Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi’*, I, 7 ff., for lengthy discussions of the import of the statement that knowledge is a *farîdah*, whether or not it is a *farîdah* in the legal sense, and which types of knowledge are individual duties and which types of knowledge are community duties. For Ṣūfî connections of the *ḥadīth* referring to China, cf. I., Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane*, 2nd ed., 127 (Paris 1954).

necessity of transmitting to others the material one learns and on the penalties attending on not transmitting it. Thus, like at-Tirmidhî, he sees “knowledge” as the epitome of the greatness and importance of the science of traditions. But on the other hand, he shares with al-Bukhârî the insight that “knowledge,” together with other important religious concepts, is to be treated as a propaedeutic subject and that the discussion of it must precede the detailed exposition of the religious injunctions of Islam.

Although he is the most recent of the authors of the six collections, an-Nasâ’î (215–303/830–915) has no “book” or chapter on *‘ilm* in his *Sunan*, which is also called *al-Mujtabâ* and which, it seems, is an abridgement of his larger *Sunan* work, which appears not to be preserved.<sup>34</sup> It should be noted, however, that al-‘Aynî, in his *Commentary on al-Bukhârî’s Şaḥiḥ*, repeatedly quotes traditions from “an-Nasâ’î *fi l-‘ilm*.”<sup>35</sup> One of these traditions is also said by al-‘Aynî to occur at the same time in “an-Nasâ’î *fi t-ṭibb*.” Only exceptionally can one of these traditions be traced to an-Nasâ’î’s *Sunan* work in its available form.<sup>36</sup> In general, the traditions cited do not occur in it at all.<sup>37</sup> It is possible but not certain that they may have been derived from the original larger compilation. So far, however, the references from al-‘Aynî remain rather enigmatic.

Still from the ninth century, we have information about a “Book on Knowledge” by Abû Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Alî al-Marwazî, who died around the year 292/904–5.<sup>38</sup> His work certainly belonged into the context of traditionist treatments of knowledge. The same applies to another *Kitâb al-‘Ilm*, cited as a work by Ibn Abî ‘Âşim. We are tempted to equate this author with the well-known *ḥadīth* scholar, Abû Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Amr b. Abî ‘Âşim an-Nabîl. This may be the correct identification, although Abû Bakr b. Abî ‘Âşim died in 287/900, and the direct authority of the author of the *Kitâb al-‘Ilm* in his chain of transmitters died as late as 301/

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Sezgin, I, 167 f.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. al-‘Aynî, *Umdat al-qārî*, I, 574, 576, 594, 624, 632.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. an-Nasâ’î, *Sunan*, VII, 128 (Cairo 1348/1930), in the *Kitâb Tahṛîm ad-dam*.

<sup>37</sup> At least, as far as I was able to ascertain by means of *Concordance*.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. al-‘Aynî, *Umdat al-qārî*, I, 557. For al-Marwazî, cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 272; Sezgin, I, 162. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdīb*, I, 62, makes reference to his authorship of a *Kitâb al-‘Ilm*.

913–14.<sup>39</sup> Further into the tenth century, we get with the *ḥadīth* scholar, aṭ-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/971), who is credited with a *Kitāb al-ʿIlm* consisting of one fascicle.<sup>40</sup>

It may not be entirely beside the mark to cast here a rapid glance at the much neglected Shiʿah (Twelver) literature dealing with *ḥadīth*. Little material is so far accessible, although there exists a large body of works of potential interest. No certain date can be assigned to its origin. Its ascription to the Imāms cannot be maintained, since this would mean that much of what is known elsewhere in Islam clearly as the result of later developments was anticipated by them. Moreover, the available manuscripts, unless they are forgeries, are as a rule too recent to give positive support to a very ancient origin of the works transmitted in them. It is less clear, however, when the oldest nucleus of this literature first found written expression and how far back individual writings have to be dated. A collection of *ḥadīths* attributed to Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) is entitled *Miṣbāḥ ash-sharīʿah wa-miftāḥ al-ḥaqīqah*.<sup>41</sup> The title already suggests a date far more recent than the ninth century, and the work's haphazard use of mystical-ethical terminology would tend to bring it further down, at least beyond the time of the eleventh-century al-Qushayrī. The *Miṣbāḥ* has chapters on "knowledge" (*ʿilm*, ch. 62), "certain knowledge" (*yaqīn*, ch. 88), "wisdom" (*ḥikmah*, ch. 99), and "ignorance" (*jahl*, ch. 77). The chapters are spread over the whole, work seemingly without any clear motivation justifying their insertion in the particular places in which they are found. "Jaʿfar" starts, of course, with the praise of knowledge as he does with the blame of ignorance whose progress is darkness<sup>42</sup> and whose recession is light.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. al-ʿAynī, *Umdat al-qārī*, I, 427, 463. Ibn Abī ʿAṣim's immediate authority was al-Muqaddamī, who is listed in *GAŁ. Suppl.*, I, 278; Sezgin, I, 165 f. For Abū Bakr b. Abī ʿAṣim an Nabīl. cf. Sezgin, I, 522. and F. Rosenthal, in *JAOI*, LXXXIX (1969), 294 a.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. aṭ-Ṭabarānī's bibliography by Yahyā b. ʿAbd-al-Wahhāb b. Mandah, in the Istanbul Ms. Esat Ef. 2431.

Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038) also wrote a *Kitāb al-ʿIlm* which was presumably concerned with traditions, cf. as-Samʿānī, *Ansāb*, ed. D. S. Margoliouth, fol. 3a (Leiden-London 1912, *E. J. W. Memorial Series* 20) = I, 6 (Hyderabad 1382/1962—).

<sup>41</sup> I used the edition of the commented Persian translation by ʿAbd-ar-Razzāq Gīlānī, who wrote in 1087/1676. R. Ettinghausen kindly me gave a copy of the second volume of the work (Teheran 1344/1965), which contains the chapters mentioned on pp. 57–66, 187–91, 249–51, and 141–44.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. below, p. 161.

He is concerned with clarifying the particular aspect of knowledge that is referred to in such common traditions as the search for knowledge being a duty, the search for knowledge to be extended even as far as China,<sup>43</sup> and the knowledge about one's soul being the knowledge of the Lord.<sup>44</sup> In the first case, the knowledge intended is the knowledge of the fear of God and of certainty (*ilm at-taqwâ wa-l-yaqîn*); in the second, the knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) the soul/self which includes the knowledge about the Lord; and in the third (where this last knowledge is particularly specified), the knowledge that requires acting in accordance with it and which is "sincere devotion" (*ikhlas*). The theme of the necessity of acting with sincere devotion is then elaborated by means of statements castigating useless knowledge and stressing the fact that just a small amount of knowledge supports a large amount of life-long work. An inscription found and deciphered by Jesus and a revelation received by David likewise indicate the need for action. "Knowledge" is the only way leading to God. The true "knower" is identified by his prayers, his piety, and his actions, and not by his appearance, his pretensions, and his words. True knowledge has always been sought in the past by those possessing intelligence, devotion (*nusk*), modesty (bashfulness, *hayâ*), and the fear of God (*khashyah*); today it is sought by men not possessing any of these qualities. Statements concerning the qualities required of teachers and students conclude "Ja'far's" chapter on knowledge. Knowledge, for "Ja'far," is the result of introspection, a response within the individual to the divine. But it is also the result of a process of teaching and studying, and it must find expression in relevant human activity. The whole would seem to be a mixture of moderate Shî'ah views of revealed and inspired knowledge and the "orthodox" concern with the methodology of the transmission of traditions and their practical legal significance.

The traditionist discussion of knowledge can be said to serve basically two purposes. First and foremost, it is intended to clarify the proper method and educational procedure to be followed in the study of traditions. Secondly, it wishes to stress the essential relationship of knowledge with the faith of the true religion, as it considers knowledge a fundamental part of it. For the *hadîth* scholars, knowledge thus is the key to both the theory and the

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. above, p. 89, n. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. below, p. 137.

practice of Islam. The second purpose is in line with the role assigned to knowledge already in the Qur'ân. The attempt to formulate an educational and scientific methodology grew out of a natural tendency toward the intelligent preservation of the accomplishments of former generations of scholars. The rapid spread of Islam threatened to bury the authority of the early Muslims under a wealth of new impressions and different views of the world. The methodical preservation of their genuine or assumed views, primarily in the ancient Oriental form of wisdom sayings or brief stories and parables, was the answer. The beginnings of this process no doubt date as early as the middle of the seventh century, or even earlier. Consolidation, it appears set in during the first half of the eighth century.<sup>45</sup> It stimulated and, in turn, was helped along by the growing acquaintance with "the plural of knowledge," with the development of individual disciplines which necessitated a certain amount of implicit and expressed reflections on the method and procedures of scholarly activity.

The most visible result of the traditionist discussion of knowledge was the permanent establishment of "knowledge" as an introductory subject for all kinds of scholarly works. The example of al-Bukhârî who moved his "Book on Knowledge" to the beginning of his authoritative *Ṣaḥih* was decisive. Monographs were written on knowledge. Introductory chapters or prefaces dealing with "knowledge," and even more frequently, remarks on the excellence and merits (*faḍl*, *faḍīlah*) of knowledge, became a well established custom. This development was not exclusively the result of the labors of *ḥadīth* compilers, but they provided the earliest stimulus. They also provided the religious justification as well as a large body of always appropriate quotations.

An example of the routine character of introductory discussions of knowledge is the addition of a first chapter "on the excellence of knowledge and of scholars" to a work based on Suḥnûn's *Muḍawwanah* which has as its author a certain Abû Sa'īd Khalaf b. Sa'īd al-Barâdhî'î and which was written in the late tenth century.<sup>46</sup> The Imâm Mâlik, as we have seen, had dealt with "knowl-

<sup>45</sup> Cf. above, p. 74. For the Syriac collection of theological sayings by Joseph Ḥazzâyâ, cf. below, p. 210. n. 2. However, it was not in any way a real parallel to the traditionist treatment of knowledge. No convincing outside model seems to exist for it.

<sup>46</sup> As mentioned by J. Schacht, in *Études d'orientalisme dédiées à la mémoire de Lévi-Provençal*, 275 (Paris 1962). Cf. Sezgin, I, 483 f.

edge” only in the most perfunctory fashion. Suhñûn (d. 240/854), writing a large legal compilation based upon Mâlik’s work, had no particular reason to devote any space to knowledge as such. Yet, as shown by al-Barâdhî, a century later it had become inevitable for “knowledge” to take its place in the discussion of Mâlikî jurisprudence. Further equally striking evidence for the general spread of the chapter on knowledge is furnished by Shî’ah legal literature, although here the historical antecedents are much harder to unravel. The Shî’ah jurist al-Kulînî (d. 328/939) begins his large *Kâfi fi ‘ilm ad-dîn* with a chapter on the intellect and intelligence (*‘aql*) and ignorance (*jahl*), and then continues with a long collection of edifying remarks on the excellence of knowledge (*fadîlat al-‘ilm*).<sup>47</sup> Later in the tenth century, another Shî’ah jurist, the famous Qâḍî an-Nu‘mân (d. 363/974), conformed even more closely to the traditionist custom. The first book of his *Da‘â’im al-Islâm* begins with the discussion of “faith,” then treats of the imâmate, and concludes with a chapter containing statements in praise of knowledge and its great importance, as found in the Qur’ân and in the traditions of Muḥammad and, principally, of ‘Alî and other ‘Alids. This is followed by a discussion of the men who are acceptable sources of religious knowledge, and those who are not.<sup>48</sup> In al-Kulînî’s case, the strong *adab* influence is unmistakable, and in that of the Qâḍî an-Nu‘mân, certain cross-currents from speculative theology may be discerned.

The custom of an initial discussion of “knowledge,” which, it seems, had its most conspicuous beginning in the *Ṣaḥîḥ* of al-Bukharî, reached its high point with al-Ghazzâlî (d. 505/1111) and the “Book on Knowledge” introducing his *Ihyâ’*. Meanwhile, logic and, above all, speculative theology had established once and for all that epistemology was the basis of scholarly activity and had to be discussed first, thereby bolstering the procedure with regard to knowledge evolved by the traditionists. For al-Ghazzâlî, the problem of knowledge is no longer simply one of knowledge as a correlative of faith and as the focus for the methodology of scholarship and educational theory and practice. These were naturally subjects of great concern to al-Ghazzâlî, but logic,

<sup>47</sup> Ed n. p., 1892, 15–36. The Shî’ah monographs on the excellence of knowledge, listed in an-Najâshî, *Rijâl*, 51, 96, 185, 266, 279 (Bombay 1317), may have been of a similar character.

<sup>48</sup> Ed. A. A. A. Fyze, I, 97–102, 103–120 (Cairo 1370/1951).

mysticism, and the entire apparatus of a highly developed intellectual life were present in his mind when he wrote on knowledge in the *Ihyâ'*. His principal and almost exclusive concern is with the adjudication of religious and moral values. He goes at great length into the determination of which knowledge, in his view, is valuable and which has to be considered harmful. The abstract concept of knowledge is no longer distinguishable here from "knowledge" as the individual, sharply defined discipline of learning. Al-Ghazzâlî is deeply involved in the eternal problem of the necessary moral qualifications of scholars and the right and wrong of the methods they use. He is strongly influenced by earlier Şûfî attitudes toward worldly and religious knowledge. His sympathies lie all with the latter, although he retains his practical attitude toward secular learning. He is concerned about the relationship between knowledge and action as the principal theme of Muslim theological ethics. He concludes his book on knowledge with remarks on the intellect, since as a result mainly of the philosophical debate, the concept of "intellect" had been pushed into the foreground of all epistemology as the presumed instrument of rational human knowledge. Al-Ghazzâlî's presentation of a wealth of problems and ideas connected with "knowledge" within a comparatively small space does not have its match elsewhere in Muslim literature as far as completeness and human attractiveness are concerned. Most importantly, however, it must not be forgotten that his book on knowledge in the *Ihyâ'* was intended to serve as an introduction to Muslim religious practice and dogma. It is followed by a brief treatment of the basic dogmas of Islam, of the nature of God and of faith.<sup>49</sup> Thereafter, the main religious duties are subjected to the author's scrutiny in great detail. The arrangement of topics is thus practically the same as the one that became established by the ninth-century traditionists. Al-Ghazzâlî continued their tradition, even if in so doing, he drew upon a much vaster reservoir of knowledge and ideas.

If any proof of the pervasive power of cultural and literary custom with regard to the chapter on knowledge is needed, it can be found in the great *Law Code* (*Mishne Tôrah*) of Moses Maimonides. The *Law Code* starts out with a first book entitled *Sēper ham-maddâ'* "Book on Knowledge," containing, as explained by the author

<sup>49</sup> English translation by N. A. Faris (Lahore 1963).

himself, all the basic duties of the Law of Moses which human beings must know.<sup>50</sup> This “Book on Knowledge” is divided into five parts. They discuss, respectively, theology (the nature of God, of the Universe, and of prophecy); the proper behavior in eating, drinking, hygiene, dealing with other people, etc.; the rules and regulations governing the study of the law and the relationship between teachers and pupils; the reprehensible aspects of idol worship and the attitude Jews are required to take toward idol worship and everything that has to do with it; and sin and repentance. This last subject makes it possible for Maimonides to conclude his “Book on Knowledge” with a few remarks on the necessity of loving God, something that can be achieved only through knowledge. Without the existence of a Bukhârî or a Ghazzâlî, and without the cultural tradition out of which their works grew, all these subjects could hardly have been united by a Jewish scholar under the title of “Book on Knowledge.” The different Jewish situation is most clearly reflected in the section on idol worship. For Jews living in a non-Jewish environment, in this case, the Muslim environment, everything touching on Jewish relations with a real or theoretical non-Jewish world was absolutely indispensable knowledge for them. The remainder of the contents of Maimonides’ “Book on Knowledge” can be read as a summary in miniature of al-Ghazzâlî’s *Ihyâ’*. In particular, those matters of concern to the Muslim author for which the following detailed discussion of Jewish law offered little, if any, room, have found their place in it and, coming at the very beginning of the entire work, have been given considerable prominence and weight. Maimonides’ “Book on Knowledge” has been ingeniously adapted to Jewish concepts and tailored to Jewish needs with respect to “knowledge.” Like al-Ghazzâlî, Maimonides possessed an original and extremely fertile mind. He did not have to have recourse to the conscious imitation of any model. However, it is obvious that his “Book on Knowledge,” occurring as it does at the beginning of the *Law Code*, owes its title, its being, and its place to the attitude of Muslim civilization toward “knowledge” and the trends and developments described in this chapter.

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<sup>50</sup> Ed. M. D. Rabinowitz (Tel Aviv 1946), English translation by M. Hyamson (Jerusalem 1962), French translation (not seen) by V. Nikiprowetzky and A. Zaoui (Paris 1961).



## 1. THE KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH

The attempts to distinguish *islām* and *īmān* (which for the sake of convenience has been translated here as “faith”) do not concern us in this investigation. It is an ancient problem in Islam. The two terms were originally conceived by and large as synonyms. However, *islām* and *īmān* came to be seen eventually as involving primarily the relationship between formal religious practice and religious belief. It is in these terms that we find the decisive discussion of the problem in al-Ghazzālī’s *Ihyā’*.<sup>51</sup> The word *islām* was also occasionally identified with *‘ilm*. An interesting example—unfortunately of quite uncertain date—is the replacement of *islām* by *‘ilm* in the famous, often quoted *ḥadīth* of Islam appearing, or starting out, as a stranger (*gharīb*) and at the end becoming a stranger again. This version, however, is rare.<sup>52</sup>

As we have seen, “knowledge” (*‘ilm*) and “faith” (*īmān*) are equated in the Qur’ān. However, this identification was not left undisturbed and undiscussed by subsequent generations of Muslim religious thinkers. It had to be investigated whether knowledge and faith were really identical, and how the relationship between them could best be defined. As in the case of *islām* and *īmān*, this involved the relationship between religious practice and religious belief, if to a minor degree. Here, it was primarily a contest between rational/material and irrational/supernatural modes of knowing and understanding. As the problem of the divine attribute of knowledge to be discussed in the following section, the problem of knowledge and faith, too, was the particular concern of Muslim speculative theology and as such part of the history of the influence of Greek logic and Christian theology upon Islam. It is to be seen

<sup>51</sup> According to J. van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Hārīt al-Muḥāsibī*, 161 (Bonn 1961), who bases himself upon ideas expressed by L. Gardet (cf. also his *Dieu et la destinée de l’homme*, 369–72, Paris 1967), al-Muḥāsibī kept *īmān* and *islām* separate, as did the Ash‘arites later on, whereas the Mu‘tazilah considered both terms identical. This is as it should be, since for purely theological speculation, it was quite superfluous to bother with making a distinction that was crucial only for those concerned with the practical side of the Muslim religion as well. Cf. also al-Qābisī, ed. A. F. al-Ahwānī, *at-Ta‘līm ‘alā ra’y al-Qābisī*, 244 ff. (Cairo 1364/1945), 2nd ed. under the title of *at-Tarbiyah fi l-Islām*, 269 ff. (Cairo 1955). For the identification of *īmān* and *islām* in the *Creed* of at-Taḥāwī (d. 321/933), cf. J. Schacht, in *Der Islam*, XXI (1933), 289. I have not seen T. Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology: A Semantic Analysis of Īmān and Islām* (Yokohama 1965).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jāmi‘*, II, 119.

together with the discussion of epistemology in theology and jurisprudence (below, chapter VII, 3), but it is more general in its implications for the identification of “knowledge” with religion in Islam and has therefore its proper place in this chapter.

Popularly, the identity of *‘ilm* and *īmān*,<sup>53</sup> or rather, the superiority of knowledge over the more elementary concerns of faith, was rarely a matter of doubt. One of the early Muslims, ‘Ubâdah b. aṣ-Ṣâmit (d. ca. 34/654–55), exhorted his son al-Walîd on his deathbed in these words, as reported by aṭ-Ṭabarî: “You will not be God-fearing, and you will not achieve *knowledge* until you *believe* in God and in predestination good or bad.”<sup>54</sup> Knowledge is clearly conceived here as coming after faith, which appears to be the more primitive and simpler achievement. On the other hand, knowledge enjoyed precedence over the recognition of the oneness of God (*tawḥîd*). For a writer on mysticism, Abû Ṭâlib al-Makkî, this is proven by verses of the Qur’ân such as 11:14/17 and 47:19/21. There, the formula “there is no God but God (Him)” is preceded by references to knowing.<sup>55</sup> Thus, knowledge comes first, and thereafter the *tawḥîd*. For Ibn ‘Arabî, “sound knowledge” (*al-‘ilm aṣ-ṣaḥîḥ*) is admittedly a higher stage than faith. It includes and preserves, yet transcends, faith.<sup>56</sup> The high Muslim esteem of knowledge as compared to faith is reflected in the mind of a Christian scholar, Abû l-Faraj b. at-Ṭayyib (d. 1043). On the basis of a similar reasoning as the one exhibited by Abû Ṭâlib al-Makkî, he argues that 1 Corinthians 12:28 shows that knowledge is superior to miracles, since Paul adopts the sequence of apostles, prophets, teachers (*‘ulamâ’*), miracles (*alladhîn yaf’alûn al-mu‘jiz, i.e., “miracle workers”*), etc.<sup>57</sup> Ibn at-Ṭayyib’s additional argument is the restrictedness of miracles as an expression of faith both in time and in place, whereas knowledge can be found always and everywhere. This proves its superiority. In Oriental Christian tradition, this attitude expectedly antedates Islam. It was held at least in

<sup>53</sup> For al-Ghazzâlî, cf. F. Jabre, *La Notion de certitude selon Ghazali*, 141 (Paris 1958). The identity of wisdom (*ḥikmah*) and the belief in God (*al-īmān bi-illâh*) is proclaimed in a saying attributed to Hermes, cf. al-Mubashshir, 15, ll, 6 ff.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. aṭ-Ṭabarî, *Annales*, I, 30.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Abû Ṭâlib al-Makkî, *Qût*, I, 172.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Ibn ‘Arabî, *Fuṣūḥ*, II, 660, ch. 292.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Abû l-Faraj b. at-Ṭayyib, *Fî l-‘ilm wa-l-mu‘jiz*, in P. Sbath, *Vingt Traîtes*, 179 f.

the limited circles of Oriental Christianity interested in philosophy. Paul the Persian, writing an exposition of Aristotelian logic for Khosraw Anôsharwân, says in his introductory remarks that “knowledge is concerned with what is near, manifest, and knowable, while faith is concerned with all the things that are remote, invisible, and not knowable with accuracy. The one (*i.e.*, faith) is affected by doubt, and the other (*i.e.*, knowledge) is without doubt. Now, any doubt produces schism, whereas the absence of doubt produces harmony. Consequently, knowledge is (better) than faith, and the one (*i.e.*, knowledge) must be preferred to the other (*i.e.*, faith). Believers, too, when questioned about (their) faith, rely upon knowledge as an excuse, saying that what we now believe in, we shall know later on.”<sup>58</sup> Thus, only where there is the likelihood of knowledge confirming faith does faith possess value for human insight.

However, some previous knowledge is necessary for the achievement of faith. Beginning with the earliest stages of Muslim theological speculation, “faith” was viewed and defined as something that somehow depended on knowledge. The term used for this knowledge that is a condition of faith is usually not *ilm* but *maʿrifah*, that is, “knowing about” the existence of certain presumed facts fundamental to faith, without necessarily “knowing” them, that is, possessing or needing a deeper insight into them. Such *maʿrifah* may be the knowledge about God, and nothing more. Or a knowledge about additional articles of faith may be considered necessary, in order to assure the presence and validity of faith. The main problem then was whether such *maʿrifah* was sufficient by itself, or whether it had to be accompanied by some express indication of the individual’s awareness of possessing it. If we can trust the attributions of later heresiographers—and we have little choice in the matter, since there are no direct, authentic sources for the opinions held by scholars from the early formative period of Muslim speculative theology—, Ghaylân, who lived around 700, conceived of knowledge about (*maʿrifah*) God as a primary insight coming to man through an act of God. Therefore, it is not part of faith. Faith, according to Ghaylân, is a secondary knowledge

<sup>58</sup> Cf. J. P. N. Land, *Anecdota Syriaca*, IV, 2 f. (text), 3 (trans.) (Leiden 1875); P. Kraus, in *RSO*, XIV (1934), 17. For faith and knowledge in the Christian tradition, cf. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, I, 112 f., 121 ff.

about God, together with the love of God and submissiveness to Him.<sup>59</sup> Since Ghaylân had possible Christian antecedents, it may not be out of place in this connection to refer to the strange combination of love and knowledge to be found in 1 Corinthians 8:3.<sup>60</sup> The necessary and intuitive character of the knowledge about God and about the principal articles of faith is also said to have been maintained by the Shi'ah in general.<sup>61</sup> The Shi'ah, however, also required, for the presence of faith, the acknowledgement (*igrâr*) of such knowledge,<sup>62</sup> whereas among the theologians bracketed in the same group with Ghaylân under the name of Murji'ah, there were some who felt that an acknowledgement was not required and, indeed, formed no part of faith.<sup>63</sup> The ill defined group of the Jahmîyah, named after Jahm b. Ṣafwân who lived one generation after Ghaylân, is credited with the doctrine that knowledge in the heart—the reporter, Ibn Taymîyah, uses the term *ilm* in this connection—is needed to assure perfect faith.<sup>64</sup> However, while Ibn Taymîyah around the year 1300 used *ilm*, Abû 'Ubayd al-Qâsim b. Sallâm, who lived five centuries earlier, did not use the term. He showed himself righteously outraged by what he stated was the Jahmîyah's definition of faith, namely, "the knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) God in the heart" pure and simple, without works and ritual observance, without an accompanying confession, without the acknowledgement of prophecy, and so on.<sup>65</sup> Among later Khârijites, the Ibâdiyyah were also said to have held the opinion that the knowledge about God alone constituted the line of separation between polytheism (*shirk*) and faith.<sup>66</sup> Again, the early Abû 'Ubayd has nothing of the sort.<sup>67</sup>

Another element was injected into the discussion, and it was one that became firmly entrenched in the majority (Ash'arite) thought of Muslim theology, by the introduction of the term

<sup>59</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 136, also, 133; W. M. Watt, *Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam*, 42 (London 1948); C. Pellat, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. Ghaylân.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. also below, p. 139.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 53. See also below, p. 148.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 54, 73.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 132.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Ibn Taymîyah, *al-Îmân*, 120.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Abu 'Ubayd, *Kutâb al-Îmân*, ed. al-Albânî, *Min kunûz as-sunnah*, 79, 101; 'Abd-al-Qâhir, *Uṣûl*, 249. Cf. also below, p. 102.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 102.

<sup>67</sup> Abû 'Ubayd, *al-Îmân*, 101.

*taṣḍīq* into the accepted definition of faith. The use of *taṣḍīq* all but eliminated the idea of *maʿrifah* as a condition of faith. When this replacement of *maʿrifah* by *taṣḍīq* began first to take place, the sources do not make sufficiently clear. *Taṣḍīq* occurs repeatedly as a synonym of *īmān* in the traditions of the Prophet.<sup>68</sup> As used in the definition of *īmān*, *taṣḍīq* literally means “declaring, or judging, to be true.” The root ṣ-d-q is found employed for translating various forms of Greek *pistos*. *Taṣḍīq* itself is used for rendering Greek *pistis* “faith.”<sup>69</sup> In its role as a synonym of faith and, at the same time, as a constituent part of knowledge, *taṣḍīq* forcefully calls to mind the definition, ascribed to Aristotle though not found in his preserved works, of *pistis* as the judgment (*krima*) that something is true, that follows upon knowledge (*epistēmē*).<sup>70</sup> The similarity between this definition and Arabic statements on faith employing the term *taṣḍīq* is such that some relationship is strongly indicated. It may have been of an indirect nature. When Greek philosophy was studied seriously in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, its approval as Aristotelian of a definition of “faith” operating principally with the term *taṣḍīq* may have recommended that definition to Muslim scholars and paved the way for the later triumph of *taṣḍīq* in connection with faith.

For the chronological problem, it would seem to be of considerable importance that monographs on “faith” written no later than the early ninth century do not yet speak about any equation of faith with knowledge, nor do they employ the word *taṣḍīq* in any significant manner. This applies to the *Kitāb al-Īmān* by Ibn Abī Shaybah, which is a straight collection of Prophetic traditions, and to the work of the same title by Abū ʿUbayd, who discusses the theory of faith from the orthodox point of view.<sup>71</sup> Outside “orthodox” circles, the use of *taṣḍīq* in connection with *īmān* is attested from

<sup>68</sup> Cf. *Concordance*, III, 276 f.

<sup>69</sup> As may be seen, for instance, in the translation of Aristotle’s *Physics* and in the use of ṣ-d-q for translating *pistis*, (*a*)*pistein* in the *Monostichoi* of Pseudo-Menander, nos. 87 and 114 of the edition by M. Ullmann, *Die arabische Überlieferung der sogenannten Menandersentzen* (Wiesbaden 1961, *AKM* 34, 1). In another sense, *pistis* in the *Monostichoi*, nos. 110 and 250, was translated very correctly not by a derivation from the root ṣ-d-q but by *amānah*. Cf. below, p. 199.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, ed. O. Stählin, II, 120, ll. 25–27 (Leipzig 1906). Cf. *Topics* 128a35 f., speaking of *tēn epistēmēn hōper pistin*. This appears in Arabic translation as *al-ʿilm huwa at-taṣḍīq*.

<sup>71</sup> Both works were edited by al-Albānī, *Min kunūz as-sunnah*.

around 800, assuming that the words of an-Najjâr (or his followers) have been reproduced with verbatim fidelity. In arguing that people possess faith in different degrees, an-Najjâr is said to have expressed himself to the effect that some men know God better (*a'lam*) than others and possess *taşđiq* of Him to a greater degree.<sup>72</sup> Already his famous teacher, Bishr al-Marîsî (d. 218/833), is credited with the definition of *îmân* as *taşđiq*, "because *îmân*, linguistically, means *taşđiq*,"<sup>73</sup> and incidentally, it may be noted here that a contemporary Şûfî, Abû 'Alî (Abû 'Abdallâh) al-Anţâkî, also equated *îmân* with *taşđiq*.<sup>74</sup> It strains belief, however, that already Jahm b. Şafwân (d. 128/746) should have used the term exactly in the same way which later became accepted, as reported by Ibn Taymîyah: "*Îmân* is just the *taşđiq* and *ilm* of the heart, thus excluding from *îmân* the actions of the heart." Moreover, Ibn Taymîyah has the customary and, for the modern scholar, highly frustrating additional and vague ascription of the definition to Jahm's "followers."<sup>75</sup> This seems all the more dubious since the formulation of Jahm's view reported by al-Ash'arî uses the expected *ma'rifah* and ascribes to Jahm the statement that "faith is just the knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) God, while unbelief (*kufî*) is just the lack of knowledge about (*jahl*) Him."<sup>76</sup> Apart of its highly doubtful value for determining the historical origins of the use of *taşđiq*, Ibn Taymîyah's formulation may be considered representative of the equation of *îmân*-faith with *taşđiq*-faith which, being elaborated in the tenth century, became a reality in Muslim

<sup>72</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 136. Judge 'Abd al-Jabbâr, who states expressly that *al-taşđiq bi-l-qalb* is the Ash'arite definition of faith, attributes to both Jahm b. Şafwân and the Najjâriyah a definition of faith as knowledge (*ma'rifah*) in the heart, cf. his *Sharh al-uşûl al-khamsah*, ed. 'Abd-al-Karîm 'Uthmân, 708 (Cairo 1384/1965).

The Imâm al-Haramayn argues that the definition of *îmân* as *taşđiq* precludes variations in the degree of faith, because *taşđiq* does not excel *taşđiq*, just as *ilm* does not excel *ilm*, cf. Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd*, 399.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 140.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Massignon, *Lexique technique*, 227.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Ibn Taymîyah, *al-Îmân*, 157. For the early dating, a Murji'ite catechism may be of importance, if it indeed originated in the second half of the eighth century. The question, "What is faith?," receives the somewhat bewildering answer, "It is *taşđiq* and *ma'rifah* and *yaqîn* and *igrâr* and *islâm*." See J. Schacht, *An Early Murci'ite Treatise: The Kitâb al-Âlim wal-muta'allim*, in *Oriens*, XVII (1964), 106.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 279, 1, 3; also above, p. 98, and Judge 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, above, n. 1.

orthodoxy at least with or immediately after al-Ash'arî. It has found its classic expression in the *Tamhîd* of al-Bâqillânî (d. 403/1013) who states: "*Îmân* is the *taşdıq* in God, it being (identical with) knowledge, and the *taşdıq* is found in the heart."<sup>77</sup> The definition of *îmân* as *taşdıq* was hereafter almost generally accepted.<sup>78</sup> The synonymous use of *ilm* and *taşdıq* in speaking of faith—apart from the different relationship of these terms in epistemology—was also nothing unusual. Al-Ghazzâlî, true to his role as the great conciliator, used it. For him, "...knowledge (*ilm*)... is the root and designated by the term 'faith' (*îmân*) in basic linguistic usage, since faith is *taşdıq* in the heart; if it is strong, it is designated by the term 'certainty' (*yaqîn*)..."<sup>79</sup>

Another suggestion toward the most plausible way of correlating faith with knowledge was made by al-Mâturîdî (d. 333/944). In the creed attributed to him, al-Mâturîdî stated that *islam*, *îmân*, *ma'rîfah*, and *tawhîd* were various aspects of man's knowledge of God.<sup>80</sup> And Ibn Fûrak (d. 406/1015) claimed the authority of al-Ash'arî for his attempt to establish a partial equation of faith and knowledge. "*Îmân*," according to Ibn Fûrak, "is believing (*i'tiqâd*) the truthfulness of the informant with regard to his information in a kind of believing that is knowledge; part of it is not knowledge."<sup>81</sup>

The practical theological problem was whether such belief and knowledge in the heart were sufficient to constitute acceptable faith (or *islâm*), or whether "acknowledgement" (in Arabic, usually, *iqrâr*) by express statement (*bi-l-lisân*, *qawl*) was an additional requirement, or whether, furthermore, actions had to accompany

<sup>77</sup> Cf. al-Bâqillânî, *Tamhîd*, 346, quoted also, for instance, by Ibn Taymîyah, *al-Îmân*, 101.

The Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd*, 397, requires knowledge for *îmân* but apparently does not equate the two. For him, "*îmân* is *taşdıq* in God. *Taşdıq* is in reality the speech of the soul, and it is established only together with knowledge."

<sup>78</sup> Cf., for instance, al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ'*, I, 103, or Abû Hâtim ar-Râzî, *Żînah*, II, 70. See also the discussion in as-Subkî, *Tabaqât ash-Shâfi'îyah*, I, 66 (Cairo 1324).

<sup>79</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ'*, IV, 211, at the beginning of the discussion of *tawakkul*. Cf. also Ibn Taymîyah, *al-Îmân*, 110, 119, 121, 195. For the Druze equation of true *ilm* with *tawhîd Mawlânâ*, see below, p. 153.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. J. A. Williams, *Islam*, 184 (New York 1961), translating the creed from the publication, not available to me, of Y. Z. Yörükân, *Islam akaidine dair eski metinler* (Istanbul 1953).

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Ibn Taymîyah, *al-Îmân*, 125.



belief and acknowledgement. The majority of Muslims, and in particular the Ḥanafites, opted for the definition of *īmān* that made faith a combination of *taṣdīq* and *iqrār*.<sup>82</sup> A summary description of the possibilities is given by Ibn Ḥazm, with, however, little regard to historical accuracy: "Some people hold the opinion that faith is just the knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) God in the heart... Others hold the opinion that faith is the acknowledgement of God by the tongue (Muḥammad b. Karrām as-Sijistānī)... All the other jurists, *ḥadīth* scholars, Mu'tazilah, Shī'ah, and all the Khārijites hold the opinion that faith is the knowledge about religion in the heart, its acknowledgement by the tongue, and action by means of the limbs of the body..." Ibn Ḥazm then refers to the replacement of *ma'rifah* by *taṣdīq* and to Abū Ḥanīfah's definition of faith as "belief expressed (*taṣdīq*) by the tongue and the heart together," as well as to the definition which replaces *ma'rifah/taṣdīq* with still another term, *'aqd*.<sup>83</sup> For al-Jurjānī (740–816/1340–1413), the Ash'arites were satisfied with *taṣdīq*, the *iqrār* being the beginning of the execution of the legal-religious duties (*aḥkām*). The Ḥanafites combined *taṣdīq* and *iqrār*, to which the Mu'tazilah added action.<sup>84</sup>

The relationship of knowledge and faith in the mystics' view was necessarily a close one. In their estimation, knowledge may well transcend any concept of faith, as it seemingly did for Ibn 'Arabī. Ordinarily, it was sufficient for Ṣūfīs to stress the identity of knowing God with believing in Him. Abū Sulaymān ad-Dārānī (d. 215/830) is credited with a fine statement to this effect: "The knowledge of God and the faith in Him are inseparable companions. The knowledge of God is the scale in which the faith in Him is weighed to determine increment from deficiency. For knowledge is the outward form of faith, uncovering and revealing it, while faith is the internal form of knowledge, stirring and kindling<sup>85</sup> it. Thus,

<sup>82</sup> Cf., for instance, the so-called *Testament* and the *Fiqh al-akbar* ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfah, in Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 125, 194, with Wensinck's comments, 132 ff., or the creed of the Ḥanafite an-Nasafī, with the commentary by at-Taftāzānī, 432–53, trans. Elder. 116–26. Cf. also above, p. 102, n. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Fīṣal*, III, 188–90, 210; I. Friedländer, in *JAOS*, XXVIII (1907), 29.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. al-Jurjānī's *Hāshiyah* to az-Zamakhsharī's *Kāshshāf*, I, 98; also, for instance, al-Malaṭī, *Tanbīh*, ed. S. Dederling, 35 ff., III ff. (Leipzig 1936, *Bibliotheca Islamica* 9).

<sup>85</sup> Text: *y-sh-gh-l-h*, read, perhaps, *yash'aluhū*.



faith is the support and the eye of knowledge, while knowledge is the strength and the tongue of faith. The weakness and the strength, the increment and the deficiency of faith are in direct proportion to the increment and the deficiency, the strength and the weakness of the knowledge of God.”<sup>86</sup> For the Şûfî, the knowledge of God was the only knowledge deserving the name, the “useful” knowledge that brought faith,<sup>87</sup> and all the manifestations of faith flowed naturally from the knowledge of and the faith in God. Ad-Dârânî’s statement resumes, or, if its attribution is genuine, somehow anticipates, in Şûfî terms, the general orthodox definition of faith, which in Şûfî usage may also be transferred to the definition of *ma’rifah*.<sup>88</sup>

In view of the almost universal trend in Islam toward an identification of faith with knowledge, it may come somewhat as a surprise to find the Ikhwân aş-şafâ’ maintaining the distinctiveness of the terms. The same Qur’anic passages which indicate to us the identity of knowledge and faith in the mind of the Prophet are taken by the “Sincere Friends” to be a convincing indication of divine differentiation between the two. Looking at their exposition more carefully, it will be possible for us to see what caused them to take the position they did. “Because many scholars,” the Ikhwân say,<sup>89</sup> “are not acquainted with the difference between *‘ilm* and *‘imân*, we must explain first what the difference consists in. Many speculative theologians (*mutakallimûn*) call faith ‘knowledge.’ They say that faith is knowledge by way of traditional learning (*‘sam‘*), while what is known through analogical reasoning (*qiyâs*) is knowledge by way of the intellect. Therefore, we want to explain right now what knowledge is in reality. The philosophers (*hukamâ’*) have said that knowledge is the perception (*taşawwur*) by the soul of the distinctive characteristics of the objects known in its essence.”<sup>90</sup> If this is knowledge, the soul does not perceive it in

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, *Qût*, I, 200. For the acceptance of the Qur’anic identification of *‘ilm* and *‘imân*, cf. *Qût*, II, 4.

<sup>87</sup> With reference to Qur’ân 30:56/56, Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, *Qût*, II, 38, makes it clear that separate use of *‘ilm* and *‘imân* in this verse means that “faith and certainty” bring with them the gift of “knowledge”, but only “useful knowledge” brings the gift of faith. This statement reflects the continuing polemics of religious scholars against “secular” knowledge.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. al-Hakîm at-Tirmidhî, *Kitâb al-‘Aql wa-l-hawâ*, ed. A. S. Firat, in *Şarkiyat Mecmuası*, V (1964), 121 f., who says: *Al-Ma’rifah taşdiq al-qalb bi-igrâr al-lisân*.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *Rasâ’il Ikhwân aş-şafâ’*, IV, 123–27.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. above, definition of knowledge E-15, p. 62.

its reality whenever information about it comes down by way of traditional learning. Consequently, such information is not knowledge, but faith (*îmân*), acknowledgement (*îqrâr*), and belief (*taşdiq*). It is for this reason that the prophets first asked their particular nations to acknowledge (*îqrâr*). Then they challenged them to believe (*taşdiq*), after clarity had been achieved (*bayân*), and then they urged them to study the true matters of knowledge (*al-ma'ârif al-ḥaqiqiyyah*). Proof of the correctness of our statement is these passages from the Qur'ân: 'Those who believe in the supernatural (2:3/2),' Here, God does not say, '...know the supernatural.' God urged the people to seek knowledge, saying: 'Consider, men of understanding,' or 'men of insight (59:2/2).'<sup>91</sup> Then, God uttered praise, saying: 'God will lift up by degrees those of you who have come to believe and those who have been given knowledge (58:11/12).' And He said: 'Those who have been given knowledge and faith (30:56/56).' This is sufficient (proof of the existence of) a difference between knowledge and faith."

In connection with the study of the true matters of knowledge (*ma'ârif*), according to the Ikhwân, every human being can be classified according to one of four categories. There are those who have been provided with knowledge but not with faith; those who have been provided with faith but not with knowledge; those who have been blessed with both; and those who are deprived of both. The Ikhwân themselves, they say, have been given an abundant share of both faith and knowledge. They are meant by the verse of the Qur'ân 58:11/12 just quoted. There are different degrees of believers, as there are different degrees of scholars. Their conclusion is rather lengthily summed up by the Ikhwân in this manner: "Since the excellence of both knower and believer as well as the meaning of knowledge and faith are now clear, we want to mention the quiddity of each and explain their quantity and quality. Now then, knowledge is the form of the object known in the soul of the knower;<sup>92</sup> and faith is believing (*taşdiq*) one who knows better than you about the information he gives<sup>93</sup> you about what you do not know... Faith is believing an informant with regard to what he says and gives information about... Faith leaves behind as its inheritance knowledge, because faith is prior in existence to

<sup>91</sup> The latter is the exact expression used in the Qur'ân.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. above, definition of knowledge E-1, p. 60.

<sup>93</sup> Text: does not give (?).

knowledge. Therefore, the prophets asked the nations to acknowledge (*iqrâr*) first what they had given them information about, and to believe (*taşdiq*) matters supernatural that their senses were not able to perceive (*idrâk*) or their imagination to picture (*taşawwur*). When they expressed acknowledgement with their tongues, the prophets called them ‘believers’ (*mu’minûn*). Then, they challenged them to believe (*taşdiq*) in their hearts, as mentioned by God in the Qur’ân 64:11/11: ‘The heart of him who believes in God, He guides aright.’ When belief (*taşdiq*) entered their hearts, the prophets called them *şiddîqûn* ‘true believers,’ as stated in the Qur’ân: ‘He who comes with the truth and believes (*şaddaqa*) in it, they are the ones who fear God (39:33/34).’ “The beginning of faith was the belief of the prophets in the information given them by the angels, and the angels themselves need faith and possess it in various degrees. “You, too, should know that you need faith and belief in the words of your informant who is superior to you in knowledge and above you in information (*ma’ârif*), because, if you do not believe in the information he gives you, you will be deprived of the noblest knowledge (*‘ulûm*) and the most important information (*ma’ârif*). You will realize that at the beginning, the only possible way for believing your informant is having confidence (*husn az-zann*) in his truthfulness (*şidq*). Then, in the course of time, the truth of that will become clear to you. Thus, do not seek proof from him at the beginning. Rather, try to picture (*taşawwara*) in your mind what you hear with your ears. Thereafter, seek a method and proof. Do not be satisfied with blind acceptance, when you have gotten halfway toward knowledge, and do not seek proof when you are at the beginning. Follow us, friend, to a gathering where you will find virtuous, learned, helpful friends of yours, to hear what they have to say, to observe their qualities, to become acquainted with their secrets, to perceive (*taşawwara*) in the pure essence of your soul what they have perceived in the pure essence of their souls, to behold with the eye of your heart, as they have beheld with the eyes of their hearts, and to see with the light of your intellect what they have seen with the light of their intellects.”

Clearly, the statement made by the Ikhwân at the beginning of their discussion of the subject as to the manner in which “speculative theologians” have identified knowledge and faith is not overly accurate in the light of the evidence presented here. The relegation of faith to the limbo of traditional knowledge, as against the certainties of intellectual knowledge, would more likely be the

work of philosophers and skeptics than of Mutakallimûn. But then, the Ikhwân do not really appear to be intent upon a separation of knowledge from faith. They stress the primacy of faith as far as the process of initiation into knowledge is concerned, but the real purpose of faith is the eventual achievement of knowledge, of true esoteric knowledge as advocated by the Sincere Friends, through a process which forcibly recalls Ismâ'îlî views and practices. For the Ikhwân, as for most other Muslims, faith is inextricably connected with knowledge. But faith here is something quite different from the faith of the theologians. It is not “*islâm*” or a set of beliefs. It is merely a tool, to be discarded after use, of the seeker of knowledge—who can be presumed to have very little interest in any formal sort of religious faith and belief.<sup>94</sup>

This helps to explain why there is so much evidence for the equation of faith and knowledge in Muslim religious writings, and so little for the opposite point of view that the two have nothing to do with each other. Those who felt that faith was to be kept separate from knowledge were the ones who were inclined to favor rationalist or esoteric knowledge and to play down the importance of formal faith. Since “faith,” however, was a sacred term of religion, it was only prudent for such thinkers to avoid public discussion of the term outside their own groups whenever possible, and not to use it when belief was under discussion merely as an element of epistemology. Thus, we rarely find clear-cut statements of views on the distinctiveness of knowledge and faith. On the other hand, the vast majority of Muslims were conditioned by the Qur’ân and the history of the term *‘ilm* to see “faith” as a function of “knowledge,” or vice versa, and they were not disposed toward swerving from their engrained habits of thought. They felt that both belonged together in the Islamic context and added mutually to their respective prestige as culture terms.

### 3. GOD’S KNOWLEDGE

The divine attribute (*ṣifah*) of *‘ilm* “knowledge” and the “name” of *‘alîm* or *‘âlîm* “knower” used for God cannot be separated from all the other attributes and names considered as belonging to the Deity. In theological discussion, they were at times seen as different

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<sup>94</sup> These observations do not apply to less intellectual levels of Ismâ’îlism where *îmân*, it may be recalled (above, p. 23, n. 2), could be defined as “the knowledge of the truth (reality).”

categories, making a distinction between the names, the attributes, and, within the attributes, between a restricted number of "essential" attributes. More rarely, distinctions were attempted within the major categories. The most convincing explanation of all the problems raised in this connection would have been one that offered a unified theory opening up the whole complex field of the divine attributes as with one master key and admitting of easy application to all its aspects. In any such theory, "knowledge" could not have been treated differently from the other attributes. However, no master key was ever found. In the many attempts to explain the problems of the divine attributes, the very nature of the concept of knowledge gave it a special and conspicuous position. "Knowledge" is found winding its way throughout the entire discussion of the attributes, in particular, the essential attributes of which it was considered one. It was, indeed, "the mother of the divine attributes."<sup>95</sup>

From the earliest times, probably from its very beginning, Muslim theology was preoccupied with the divine attributes.<sup>96</sup> It maintained its passionate interest in them and considered them a central problem after other important subjects of discussion, such as the character of the leadership of the Muslim community (*imāmah* "caliphate"), had faded into the background. Islam, it seems, never knew any theological speculation that did without them. The concept of God's knowledge, His omniscience, was an ever present

<sup>95</sup> Cf. al-Kalanbawī (d. 1205/1790–91), in his *Gloss* to ad-Dawwānī's *Commentary* on al-Ījī's *Aqā'id al-Adudīyah*, II, 2 (Constantinople 1316).

According to Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1178b7 f., 21, perfect happiness is a *theōrētikē energeia*, and the *energeia* of God is such a *theōrētikē energeia*. In Graeco-Muslim philosophy, this is transformed to read, "The only virtue that may be ascribed to God is knowledge," cf. *Kutāb as-Sa'ādah*, 7. The transformation may be due to some intermediary such as a Greek commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* or on the *lambda* of the *Metaphysics*.

<sup>96</sup> As indicated above, the historical sequence of the early discussion cannot now be determined with any certainty and is of no real consequence for this study. The first requirement for any attempt at sorting out the various opinions historically would be detailed collections of all the fragments ascribed to each major figure. Whether this will lead to the desired result, is doubtful, but it has not been seriously attempted. A premature and incomplete attempt to collect all the material according to individual theologians chronologically arranged in translation was made by M. Horten, *Die philosophischen Systeme der spekulativen Theologen im Islam* (Bonn 1912), a work quite admirable for its time. However, Horten attempted too much interpretation, giving the impression of sure knowledge where there were, and still are, at best, hints and clues.

reality to scholars in whatever field of intellectual endeavor they happened to be engaged.

A very definite purpose was behind the discussion of the divine names and attributes. It explains why that discussion was so heated and why it never stopped. This purpose is as easy for us to perceive as it was near impossible for Muslims to admit and express. It was to provide rational reassurance for the existence of God. Officially, it was maintained that the existence of God was a fact vouchsafed by necessary knowledge and independent of all the discussion about His attributes.<sup>97</sup> However, if it was possible to show exactly in which way God differed from human beings in those human terms which belonged to Him according to the divine revelation of the Qur'ân, then the existence of the Deity, stated so boldly and uncompromisingly by the Law, became comprehensible to the human mind. Custom and tradition may have contributed to keeping alive the discussion of the long exhausted topic, but its amazing vitality was the result of its essential purpose which was to show that God could be "described" and, therefore, could not be denied existence. The argument was of necessity circular. If God exists, it must be possible to describe Him. And if it is possible to describe Him, then there can be no doubt of His existence. Thus, an unmistakable aura of unreality envelops the entire endless discussion of the attributes in general, and of God's knowledge in particular. It is always obvious that the argument depends upon assumed and completely arbitrary premises. As a result, we find that for every point of detail, opposite views could be, and were, argued with equal vigor and conviction, if, of course, not with equal historical success.

It is in a way surprising that the Muslims took to the debate about the manner in which traditional anthropomorphic descriptions of the Deity were to be understood and explained with such zeal and at such an early date in Muslim history. The Qur'ân is quite explicit on such matters as God's knowledge, and the later popular understanding of what God's knowledge was never went beyond elaborating the concept in terms such as those put together al-Ghazzâlî: "God knows (*'âlim*) all objects of knowledge and comprehends whatever takes place (in the world) from the boundaries of the earth to the highest point of heaven. He is knowing

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<sup>97</sup> Cf., for instance, the Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd*, 28–31, 191.

(*ʿālim*) in a way which makes it certain that the weight of a particle of dust on earth and in heaven does not escape His knowledge. Indeed, He knows the scurrying of a black ant upon a hard rock in a dark night. He perceives the motion of the mote in the air. He knows what is secret and hidden. He observes the innermost thoughts that occur, the ideas that stir, and the secrets that are concealed in the heart.”<sup>98</sup> With these words, al-Ghazzālī does not mean to cater to popular feeling and intellectual limitation, even if they express well how ordinary people pictured God’s knowledge. Each one of them echoes the theological discussion of preceding centuries. This becomes much clearer from his concluding words: “(God knows) by means of a primeval (uncreated, *qadīm*)<sup>99</sup> and eternal knowledge that has never ceased to be an attribute of His in all eternity, and not by means of a knowledge that is constantly new and arrives in His essence through in-dwelling and transference.” Long exposure had accustomed a large number of medieval Muslims to accept such difficult terminology. On the other hand, most of the speculation behind it remained accessible only to the very few. “The understanding of the masses does not suffice to understand such subtleties.”<sup>100</sup> This was the way Ibn Rushd put it in the twelfth century, but it must have been clear from the outset that the speculation about the divine attributes was far above the heads of the followers of the new religion, and that it spelled trouble. While probably no theologian meant to doubt openly that God had “life,”<sup>101</sup> or was willing to admit bluntly that God did not have “knowledge,”<sup>102</sup> the mere asking of questions about the concept of God raised the spectre of an embarrassing inability

<sup>98</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyāʾ*, I, 80, ll, 3 ff., and 96.

<sup>99</sup> “Primeval” seems an appropriate translation for *qadīm*. It is a way to avoid using “uncreated” or “eternal”, for which other words exist in Arabic. “Primeval” somehow reflects the root meaning of the word which, it is true, may no longer have been felt. *Qadīm* has therefore been translated here consistently by “primeval,” with an occasional reminder in brackets that “uncreated” is what is meant.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, trans. S. van den Bergh, I, 215.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 503.

<sup>102</sup> Cf., for instance, the *Kitāb al-Haydah*, ed. Jamīl Ṣalībā, 51 f. (Damascus 1384/1964), ascribed to ‘Abd-al-ʿAzīz al-Kinānī, who lived in the first half of the ninth century (cf. Sezgin, I, 617): “Do you acknowledge, Bishr (al-Marīsi), that God has knowledge, as we have been informed (by the divine revelation), or do you contradict the revelation? Bishr dodged the answer, not wanting to express unbelief openly by saying, ‘God does not have knowledge.’...” For the discussion and its meaning, cf. below, p. 120.

to answer them and of coming up with answers that might have appeared convincing to some but were in apparent contradiction to the words of the divine revelation. The conviction that it was better not to ponder the "how?" of the divine attributes rapidly gained ground. Why, then, was the discussion started in the first place? It could be hardly doubted that we must see in it a continuation of the similar discussion that had long occupied Christian theology and the Hellenistic world in which Christianity had gained maturity. However, why did the Muslims take up so readily something that was strange and foreign to them and, moreover, did not constitute any clear-cut practical gain for pious and fervent believers? Again, we are confronted with the mystery of intellectual creativity. Among the early Muslim theologians, there must have been many with Christian antecedents who merely transferred their accustomed patterns of thought to the new religion. Also, Muslim scholars were forced to some degree to combat Christian theological criticism of Islam on the home ground of the attackers with the techniques employed by them. The principal motivation, however, seems to have come from a creative force unleashed by a movement which felt driven to remodel the higher civilization of the time of which it itself was an underprivileged offshoot. Since it was a religious movement, its first major effort was directed toward metaphysical questions; the other branches of philosophy and science were taken up and assimilated at a somewhat later stage. The initial impulse was naturally to seize eagerly and appropriate whatever there was there. But then, the new creative force went to work turning it into something much larger and more powerful than it had been before. Christian theology provided the first opportunity for Muslims to become acquainted with the question of the divine attributes. Almost immediately, however, Islam went far beyond its original source of inspiration. According to John of Damascus, God knows (*epistatai*) all things, and He has an all-encompassing foreknowledge (*synhektikê pronoia*) and knows (*eidenai*) all things before their creation (*genesis*).<sup>103</sup> Yet, other lists

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<sup>103</sup> Cf. John of Damascus, *Pégē gnōseōs*, 808 f., 919, trans. Chase, 177, 207. According to Watt, *Free Will*, 58, n. 27, the entire formulation of the problem of predestination (*qadar*) in Islam is different from the ideas expressed by John of Damascus. For the relationship of John of Damascus with Muslim speculative theology in general, cf. also, for instance, Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 77 ff. and *passim*; M. S. Seale, *Muslim Theology*, 30 ff. and *passim* (London 1964).



of divine attributes in the Damascene's work do not include "knowing." Already, it seems, at the same time and possibly even earlier, but certainly not very long thereafter, Muslim theologians bandied about a whole plethora of the most subtle questions concerning the concept of divine knowledge. It is fairly certain that the elaboration was their own and constitutes the creative response to the presence of ideas which they would have done better to keep away from. But such is the power of ideas that once they exist, their spread is difficult and often impossible to halt.

The Muslim discussion of God's knowledge concentrates on the term *ʿilm*, as against any other term of cognition, including the root *ʿ-r-f*. Yet, it should be noted that the *Testament* attributed to Abû Ḥanîfah ascribes *maʿrifah* to God and sharply distinguishes the function of this *maʿrifah* in God from that of the *ʿilm* possessed by Him. God's *maʿrifah* appears to be a momentary awareness of happenings, serving as a supplement and, if such a term may be used in connection with God, corrective of His eternal and consistent knowledge.<sup>104</sup> But the root *ʿ-r-f* is not employed in the Qurʾân in connection with God. And, whether *ʿ-r-f* was considered a synonym of *ʿ-l-m* or differentiated from it in the conventional manner in which terms of intellectual perception may be differentiated from each other, *ʿ-r-f* never really entered the discussion of the divine attribute of knowledge. According to the Muʿtazilah al-Jubbâʾî (b. 235/849–50, d. 303/916), God could indeed be given the name of *ʿâlim*, if (human) reason indicates that He is knowing, even if He Himself had not applied to Himself the name of "knower." However, the Baghdâdî school of Muʿtazilah did not admit this possibility. They thought that "*ʿâlim* has the same meaning as *ʿarif*, but we designate God as '*ʿâlim*,' because He has thus designated Himself, and we do not designate Him as '*ʿarif*,' " and this applies to other synonyms of *ʿâlim*, such as *fahim*.<sup>105</sup>

A philological explanation of the inapplicability of *ʿ-r-f* to God was given by Abû Hilâl al-ʿAskarî (d. 395/1005). He proceeded from the argument of az-Zuhrî<sup>106</sup> which went as follows: "I do not describe God as *ʿarif*, though I do not blame anyone who describes Him thus, because *maʿrifah* is derived from the *ʿirfân* of the man-

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 126 f.; Seale, *Muslim Theology*, 18.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. al-Ashʿarî, *Maqâlât*, 525.

<sup>106</sup> I am not sure about the identity of this Zuhri, if this is indeed the correct form of the name.

sion, that is, the traces (*âthâr*) which serve to make the mansion in question recognizable (‘*r-f*). It is not permissible to assume that God’s knowledge of things comes from effect (‘trace’) and indication (*dalîl*). *Ma’rifah* is the act of distinguishing (*tamyîz*) between the objects of knowledge.” For al-‘Askari, ‘*l-m* is a transitive root that may take two objects (“to know someone/something as something”), whereas ‘*r-f* is restricted to one object (“to know, to recognize, to be acquainted with someone/something”). The grammatical difference is indicative of the difference in meaning that exists between the two roots. ‘*r-f* indicates the distinction of one object of knowledge from another (“to know Zayd,” as distinguished from somebody else). ‘*l-m* does this only by virtue of some other kind of particularity connected with the object of knowledge referred to (“to know Zayd as standing”). *Ma’rifah* is more restricted than ‘*ilm*, because it is the knowledge of only some aspect of something. *‘Ilm*, on the other hand, is both comprehensive and detailed knowledge. “Every *ma’rifah* is an ‘*ilm*, but not every ‘*ilm* is (necessarily) *ma’rifah*.” The objects of knowledge may be assumed to be distinct in God, and *ma’rifah* shows their distinctiveness, but God’s knowledge is not the act of making a distinction between objects.<sup>107</sup> Consequently, it is something more than *ma’rifah* and cannot properly be called *ma’rifah*.

Basically the same line of argument was followed by later scholars, as it presumably had been by scholars prior to the time if Abû Hilâl al-‘Askarî. Ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahânî (11th century) connects ‘*r-f* with the meaning of “smell” or of “border, rim.” He views *ma’rifah* (opposite *inkâr*) as more restricted in meaning than ‘*ilm* (opposite *jahl*), inasmuch as it is “the perception of something by reflecting about and pondering over its effect (*athar* ‘trace’),”<sup>108</sup> obviously an inferior way of perception inadmissible in God. Certain scholars contended that there was no difference between the two roots and their applicability or inapplicability to God. The basis for their contention was the Qur’anic passages 8:60/62 and 9:101/102 which mention God’s knowing (‘*l-m*), that is, being acquainted with, someone and the simultaneous not

<sup>107</sup> Cf. al-‘Askarî, *Furûq*, 14, 62 f.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahânî, *Mufradât*, III, 103, s.v. ‘*r-f*. Cf. also below, p. 134. According to ad-Dawwânî, as quoted by al-‘Âmilî, *Kashkûl*, I, 397 (Cairo 1380/1961), “others” held the same opinion, probably before and after ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahânî.

knowing of human beings. However, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah (691–751/1292–1350), who reports this view,<sup>109</sup> prefers the more common view that *ʿr-f* is inapplicable to God's knowledge. *ʿr-f*, he contends, means simple knowledge (such as knowing about Zayd and about standing), whereas *ʿl-m* means composite knowledge (such as knowing that Zayd is standing). Therefore, "some Mutakallimūn have maintained that since in contrast to created beings, God knows simple and composite things without distinction, the root *ʿr-f* is inapplicable to Him." For Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, this is based upon the theory, which he is not willing to accept, that God knows everything in the same way (His knowing the truth of the Prophet being identical with His knowing the untruth of the pseudo-prophet Musaylimah). He himself believes in the differentness of the various objects of knowledge and of the knowledge by which each is known. Therefore, it must be the root meaning of *ʿr-f* which precludes its use for God. *ʿr-f* indicates cognition, mental or physical, of someone or something, after having forgotten or lost touch with him/it and the unscrambling of a confused notion—which, of course, is a state of affairs never present with the Deity.<sup>110</sup> Still another explanation along these lines was offered by ash-Sharīf al-Jurjānī. In contrast to *ʿlm*, *maʿrifah* to him implies either of two notions. One of them is "perception following upon ignorance," and the other, "the last of two perceptions of one and the same thing which are separated by non-being (non-understanding, *ʿadam*)."<sup>111</sup> Neither is a fitting description of God's way of knowing.

The discussion of the "grammarians," as he characterizes them, was taken up by Ibn ʿArabi and transformed by him with that

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *Badāʾiʿ*, II, 62 f. The author refers to one of his other works, entitled *at-Tuhfah al-Makkīyah*, where the subject was treated in greater detail.

<sup>110</sup> According to a saying ascribed to Plato, "the difference between knowing about (*maʿrifah*) a thing and knowing (*ʿlm*) it is that *maʿrifah* is remembering what one has forgotten, whereas *ʿlm* of a thing means that aspects of it not perceived before become firmly established in one's soul." Cf. Ibn Hindū, *al-Kalim ar-rūḥānīyah*, 27 f. (Cairo 1318/1900). This part of the edition does not seem to belong to Ibn Hindū's text but was added by the editor, Muṣṭafā al-Qabbānī, from some unidentified collection of Platonic sayings.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. al-ʿAmīlī, *Kashkūl*, I, 397, citing the *Gloss* of ash-Sharīf ar-Raḍī to the *Sharḥ Maṭāliʿ al-anwār*. This *Sharḥ* appears to be al-Jurjānī's *Gloss* to the work of al-Urmawī (594–682/1198–1283), but in the absence of the text, this identification could not be checked. On *ʿadam*, cf. also below, p. 227.

reckless abandon which is the hallmark of the imaginative mind. The occasion seized by Ibn 'Arabî for discussing the matter came in connection with the place name 'Arafah. The locality near Mecca was named 'Arafah, Ibn 'Arabî suggests, because of the noble character of "*ma'rifah* which is identical with '*ilm*.'" Since in Arabic, '*r-f*' takes only one object, oneness (*aḥadiyyah*) belongs to *ma'rifah*, and *ma'rifah* is an especially noble term for knowledge. "*Ma'rifah*, in a way, is knowledge ('*ilm*) of the divine oneness, whereas '*ilm*, in contrast to *ma'rifah*, applies to oneness as well as to other matters." The grammarians, referring to the Qur'ānic verse 8:60/62, which is customarily cited in this discussion: "You do not know ('*l-m*) them, God knows them," conclude that '*l-m*' here takes the place of '*r-f*', and thus takes one object and has relation to oneness. But, Ibn 'Arabî says, they neglected to pay attention to something known to him and to his fellow mystics, namely, that '*ilm* also strives after oneness, and therefore may rightly be called *ma'rifah*. In practice, *ma'rifah* is not used as an attribute of God, although it falls under the same definition as '*ilm*, yet, *ma'rifah* is one of the synonyms ("names") of '*ilm*, and the term '*arif* is used by the mystics as a designation of the knower of oneness. The oneness in the root '*l-m*' lies in the fact that "knowing Zayd as standing" does not aim at a knowledge ('*r-f*) of Zayd and of his standing but at the relationship that is implied in the statement, which is one object, while the grammarians wrongly assumed that the knowledge of the relationship between Zayd and his standing was identical with the knowledge of Zayd and of standing. However, both Zayd and the standing must have been known before a relationship between them can be known.<sup>112</sup>

A philosophical distinction between the meanings of the two roots, as may be found in the *Mu'tabar* of Abû l-Barakât,<sup>113</sup> starts from the concept of simple and compound data and leads to the result that '*ilm* is more restricted in meaning than *ma'rifah* but for this reason represents a more complex stage of intellectual activity. *Ma'rifah* is more general than '*ilm* and prior to it. Since everything composite contains the simple elements from which it is compounded, every '*ilm* contains some *ma'rifah* which is the

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Ibn 'Arabî, *Futûḥât*, I, 636. For the problem of *ma'rifah* "gnosis" and its relation to '*ilm*, which is uppermost on Ibn 'Arabî's mind here, cf. below, pp. 165 ff.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Abû l-Barakât, *Mu'tabar*, I, 36.

perception (*taṣawwur*) of the simple elements contained in it. However, since not all simple matters appear in composition, the opposite is not correct, and not every *maʿrifah* is connected with an *ʿilm*. Abū l-Barakāt states elsewhere<sup>114</sup> that *ʿilm* goes beyond *maʿrifah* also in that it requires for its realization an additional element of judgment. In these passages, Abū l-Barakāt is not at all concerned with the idea of divine knowledge. The distinction would, however, have been applicable if God's knowledge had been under discussion.

During the late stages of medieval Islam, all these reflections on the relationship between *ʿ-l-m* and *ʿ-r-f* were at times thrown together under the general impression that no plausible and valid distinction could be made between the two roots. Thus, in the introduction of his essay on *maʿrifah*, Muḥammad b. Quṭb-ad-dīn al-Iznîqî (d. 885/1480)<sup>115</sup> cites the distinction between the Ṣūfî *ʿarif* and the *ʿālim* made by Kamāl-ad-dīn al-Kāshānî to the effect that "the gnostic (*ʿarif*) is the one whom God allows to witness His essence, attributes, names, and actions, with gnosis (*maʿrifah*) being a state originating from witnessing the truth by means of the truth together with the remainder of the true form (*rasm*) which is illuminated<sup>116</sup> by the light of the Essence and the ray of the one (?) face, whereas the knower (*ʿālim*) is the one to whom God gives knowledge not through witnessing but through certainty."<sup>117</sup> However, al-Iznîqî's further remarks on the subject of mystic *maʿrifah* pay no attention to "knowledge," and he seems to prefer the view that both terms are linguistically identical. He draws upon

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Abū l-Barakāt, *Muʿtabar*, II, 395, III, 2, see above, p. 53, definition A-14.

Two centuries earlier, the superiority of *ʿilm* over *maʿrifah* was defended by the author of the *Kitāb al-Badʾ wa-t-taʾrīkh*, believed to have been a certain al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisi. He adopted the view that *ʿilm* is the comprehension of the essence and the definition of the thing as such, whereas *maʿrifah* is the perception (*idrāk*) of the essence and persistence (*thabāt*) of the thing, even without a perception of its essence and reality. *ʿilm* is thus more general and far-reaching than *maʿrifah*. Everything known (*maʿlūm*) is at the same time known about (*maʿrūf*), while not everything known about is also known. The intellectual means for attaining cognition (*maʿrifah*) are the instruments for the achievement of knowledge. Cf. the edition and translation by C. Huart, *Le Livre de la création*, I, 21 f. (text), 18 (trans.) (Paris 1899, *Publications de l'École des Langues Or. Vivantes*, IV. 16).

<sup>115</sup> Cf. *GAL. Suppl.*, II, 328, and, for al-Kāshānî, II, 280 f.

<sup>116</sup> *Munawwar*, rather than the active *munawwir*.

<sup>117</sup> Contrast definition L-4, above, p. 68.

philosophy by adducing the incipient words from Ibn Sînâ's *Najâh* where *ma'rifah* and *ilm* are mentioned in one breath as apparent synonyms. However, he bravely tries to associate *ilm* with apperception (*taşdîqât*), and *ma'rifah* with perception (*taşawwurât*). He draws upon philology by mentioning the related argument of the two objects of *‘l-m* as against the one object of *‘r-f*, and from theology, he derives the argument of the inapplicability of *‘l-m* to man's knowledge of God, since *‘l-m* implies total comprehension of universals, whereas *‘r-f* is employed with regard to particulars (and implies partial knowledge). Further, since *ma'rifah* implies understanding (*idrâk*) after ignorance or a secondary understanding interrupted by a period of non-understanding (*‘adam*), neither of which is the case in connection with *ilm*, God can be called *‘âlim*, but He cannot be called *‘ârîf*.<sup>118</sup>

Much additional ingenuity was no doubt spent by other Muslim scholars upon the explanation of the inapplicability of the root *‘r-f* to divine knowledge. Regardless of the possible degree of truth or probability these speculations contained—and it must be rated very low indeed—the fact remains that God's knowledge was properly designated only by the term *ilm*. The Şûfî Abû Sa'îd al-Kharrâz expressed the situation with admirable succinctness by stating that "God knew (*‘l-m*) you, before you knew about (*‘r-f*) Him."<sup>119</sup> Going beyond the immediate mystic concern of its author, this statement shows the great difference in value which Muslim consciousness attached to the two roots.

The basic point of contention with regard to God's knowledge and knowing was the question of eternity. Complete denial of the possibility of employing any descriptive attribute in connection with God was in flagrant contradiction to the Qur'ân, but "philosophers" went occasionally so far as to describe God merely as "eternal."<sup>120</sup> With regard to the eternity of His knowledge and His knowing, the formula, "He has not ceased knowing" (*lam yazal 'âliman*), finally won the day. Certain radical Shî'ah theologians are said to have denied it,<sup>121</sup> whereas the Mu'tazilah accepted the

<sup>118</sup> For al-Iznîqî's work, I used the Topkapusaray manuscript Ahmet III 3163 (Catalogue Karatay 7446), which contains it on fols. I-27a, cf. fols. 2b-3b.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. al-Kharrâz, *Kitâb as-Şîdq*, ed. A. J. Arberry, 73, trans. 59 (Oxford 1937). Cf. also below, pp. 129 ff.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 183 f.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 157, ll. 15 f.

statement with, however, several restrictions as to the objects of God's knowing, since an eternal knowing by God might otherwise give rise to the assumption of eternal objects of His knowing.<sup>122</sup> God is also assumed to have not been knowing before He created the creation<sup>123</sup> or the knowledge by which He then became knowing.<sup>124</sup> As to the meaning and method of God's knowing, His "knowing may mean His not being ignorant."<sup>125</sup> Or, according to an-Nazzâm, the use of the term "knowing" for God affirmed His essence and eliminated the possibility of ignorance on God's part.<sup>126</sup> He may be knowing "in reality," in the true sense of the term (*fi l-ḥaqîqah*), or metaphorically (*bi-l-majāz*). Thus, 'Abbâd b. Sulaymân (first half of the ninth century), who seems to have been followed in this respect by al-Jubbâ'î, is said to have expressed the view that God cannot be knowing in the real sense, because, if this were the case, there could be no knower except God. An-Nâshî (d. 293/906) maintained that God was knowing in reality and man was knowing metaphorically, whereas a contemporary of al-Ash'arî, Ibn al-Iyâdî, upheld the opposite view. Most Mutakallimûn thought that both God and man were knowing in reality.<sup>127</sup> God may be "knowing by means of knowledge" or "not by means of knowledge, but essentially" (*'âlim bi-dhâtih*).<sup>128</sup> His knowing may be "knowing not like (human) knowers."<sup>129</sup> With the growing acceptance by Muslim thinkers of Aristotelian philosophy, the question of the objects of God's knowing became the center of discussion. The objects being

<sup>122</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 158–61, 488.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 212, l. 16. This is said to be the opinion of the Mujassimah, meaning, it seems, the Jahmîyah, cf. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. tashbih.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Ibn ar-Râwandî, *Qaḍîb adh-dhahab* ("The Golden Rod"), according to the *Fihrist* in the portion published by M. T. Houtsma, in *WZKM*, IV (1890), 217–35, and republished at the end of the Cairo edition of the *Fihrist*, p. 5 (Cairo 1348), cf. the Persian translation of the *Fihrist* by M. Riḍâ Tajaddud, 317 (Teheran 1343). Ibn ar-Râwandî's view is said to have been refuted by al-Khayyât.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 166, 281, who reports this as the opinion of Ḍirâr b. 'Amr (cf. Sezgin, I, 614). Ḍirâr lived in the eighth century, but there is some doubt as to whether he lived or did not live long beyond the middle of the century.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 166, also 487 f. (Ḍirâr).

<sup>127</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 183 f., 483, 500, 524.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 71, 166 ('Abbâd), 168 (Mu'ammâr), 488 (Mu'ammâr); 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, *Sharḥ al-uṣûl al-khamsah*, 201 ff.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 168, 501, 519, as the opinion of Abû l-Ḥusayn aṣ-Ṣâliḥî.



divided into particulars and universals, the question was whether God's knowing extended to the particulars and what it means that God knows only Himself.<sup>130</sup> Another question was whether God could know Himself, which was discussed as a problem of epistemology and is rather unlikely to have already occupied Mu'ammār, who died, probably, in the early ninth century, in the way stated by Ibn Ḥazm.<sup>131</sup>

The problem of God's "knowing" was not identical with the problem of God's "knowledge," even if the two notions could not be held strictly apart and it was accepted later on that God's possession of knowledge followed from God's knowing.<sup>132</sup> The famous ninth-century mystic, Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, is said to have denied God both *ʿilm* and *maʿrifah*, because only something known (knowable) can be alluded to as possessing knowledge (*ʿilm*), and only something limited (*maḥdūd*) as possessing cognition (*maʿrifah*); thus, only an unbeliever or a heretic would do the one or the other.<sup>133</sup> For the Muʿtazilah, the eternity of God's knowing was problematical. The eternity of God's knowledge was inadmissible. In this sense, an-Nazzām<sup>134</sup> as well as Bishr al-Marīsī,<sup>135</sup> we are told, denied God's knowledge. The Muʿtazilah, in general, agreed that the Creator was not the possessor of a created knowledge by which He knew.<sup>136</sup> They admitted only that "He was knowing without a primeval knowledge."<sup>137</sup> Once the interpretation of *ʿilm* as referring

<sup>130</sup> Cf., for instance, Ibn as-Sīd al-Baṭalyawṣī, *Kitāb al-Ḥadāʾiq*, ed. M. Asín Palacios, in *al-Andalus*, V (1940), 89 ff.; Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, trans. van den Bergh, I, 200 ff., 275 ff., also his *Risālah fī bayān aqwāl al-ḥukamāʾ*, ch. 6, in the Istanbul Ms. Hac. Mahmud Ef. 5683; Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn*, I, ch. 53, III, ch. 20, trans. S. Pines, *The Guide of the Perplexed* (Chicago 1963); M. E. Marmura, *Some Aspects of Avicenna's Theory of God's Knowledge of Particulars*, in *JAOS*, LXXXII (1962), 299–312; R. Arnaldez, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., II, 772b, s.v. falsafa.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Fīṣal*, IV, 194, and ash-Shahrastānī, *Mīlāl*, ed. W. Cureton, 48 (London 1842–46) [= I, 87 (in the margin of Ibn Ḥazm, *Fīṣal*)], trans. T. Haarbrücker, I, 71 (Halle 1850–51), but not so in al-Ashʿarī. Cf. also Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, I, 652 f. (Beirut 1963–64), in his survey of various views on God's knowing; A. Chejne, in *The Muslim World*, LI (1961), 314.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 169 (ʿAbdallāh b. Kullāb); al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 197 ff.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. as-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ*, 295 (Cairo 1380/1960).

<sup>134</sup> Cf. al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 486.

<sup>135</sup> See above, p. III, n. 5.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 206.

<sup>137</sup> This phrasing of the general view of the orthodox Muʿtazilah goes back to Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūl*, III, 331.



not to “knowledge” *per se* but to the “objects of knowledge” is accepted, references to God’s knowledge in the Qur’ân are not quite as numerous as one might be inclined to think, and scholars such as al-Bâqillânî who argued philosophically for God’s knowledge against the Mu‘tazilah were able to cite only two passages from the Qur’ân as suitable arguments from Scripture (4:166/164 and 35:11/12).<sup>138</sup> The opinion of the Jahmîyah is said to have been that God’s knowledge was created. He created it, and then He knew by means of it.<sup>139</sup> More precisely, whenever God created something, He created for Himself a knowledge of its coming-into-being through which He knew what He had not known before.<sup>140</sup> For the createdness of God’s knowledge, reference was made to the Qur’ânic expression in the famous throne verse, *shay’ min ‘ilmih* “something of His<sup>141</sup> knowledge” (2:255/256). The preposition being understood as partitive, the knowledge of God mentioned here would admit of parts and, therefore, must have been something created.<sup>142</sup> As Ibn Ḥazm reports with disapproval, a Spanish Neo-Mu‘tazilah assumed that God’s created knowledge consisted of two kinds, a knowledge of universals which included the knowledge of supernatural data and of such general matters as the existence of believers and of unbelievers, and a knowledge of particulars, known by God only when it comes into being.<sup>143</sup> The Mu‘tazilah did not deny,

<sup>138</sup> Cf. al-Bâqillânî, *Tamhîd*, 203. The entire chapter of the *Tamhîd* (pp. 197–212) is basic for the “orthodox” point of view.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. al-Ash‘arî, *Maqâlât*, 22, 494, see R. M. Frank, *The Neoplatonism of Ġāhm ibn Ṣafwân*, in *Le Muséon*, LXXVIII (1965), 395–424, especially, 408 ff.; Ibn Ḥazm, *Fîṣal*, IV, 204: ‘Abd-al-Jabbâr, *Sharḥ al-uṣûl al-khamsah*, 183; an-Nisâbüri, *Uqalâ’ al-majānin*, 98 (an-Najaf 1387/1968). Ibn Ḥazm, *Fîṣal*, IV, 182, reports the same opinion as held by the Shī‘ites Hishâm b. al-Hakam and his pupil, Abû ‘Alî aṣ-Ṣakkâk.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. ad-Dârimî, *Kutâb ar-Radd ‘alâ l-Jahmîyah*, ed. G. Vitestam, 65 (Lund and Leiden 1960); Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd*, 95 f. See also O. Pretzl, *Die frühislamische Attributenlehre*, 18 f. (Munich 1940, *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wiss., philos.-hist. Abt.*, 1940, 4). Cf. also *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. *badâ’*.

<sup>141</sup> The reference of this pronoun to God appears incontestable. However, in his recent German translation of the Qur’ân, 38 (Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln-Mainz 1966), R. Paret seems to prefer understanding it as referring to the previously mentioned object of God’s knowledge, *wissen nichts davon* “of the knowledge of that”. This is all but impossible. The situation here is quite different from the passage 20:110/109, discussed below, pp. 130 ff.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Fîṣal*, II, 133, see I. Goldziher, *Die Zâhiriten*, 123 (Leipzig 1884).

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Fîṣal*, IV, 198, speaking about Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallâh b. Murrah b. Najîḥ al-Andalusî.

much as they might have liked to do that or as their adversaries believed they did, that God had knowledge. An-Nazzâm and others supposedly believed that speaking of God's knowledge meant that He was knowing,<sup>144</sup> and according to 'Abbâd b. Sulaymân, it ought to be said neither that God had knowledge nor that He did not have knowledge.<sup>145</sup> The formula widely used by Mu'tazilah and certain sectarians was that "God has knowledge in the sense that He is knowing;"<sup>146</sup> this tends to be contrasted with the rather different notion that God has knowledge in the sense of "objects known,"<sup>147</sup> which in Mu'tazilah thought are finite.<sup>148</sup>

The identity or non-identity of God's knowledge with God was fervently discussed. Either alternative was defended.<sup>149</sup> The compromise solution that God's knowledge was neither identical with Him nor other than Him, hard as it is to understand, was the natural escape from the dilemma.<sup>150</sup> From the statement that God's knowledge was identical with Him or with His essence,<sup>151</sup> it was only a short but dangerous step to the statement that "the knowledge of God is God," which the Jahmites are supposed—it seems, wrongly—to have taken.<sup>152</sup> We are told by both Muslim and Jewish authors that among Christians, Jesus the Son is considered as identical with the divine knowledge.<sup>153</sup> The tenth-century Qaraite

<sup>144</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 187 f.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 188, 497.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 164.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 165, 188, 508. See Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Badâ'i*, II, 91, for 'ilm as "object known" and as an infinitive implying the object known.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 163 f. Al-Khayyât, *Kitâb al-Intisâr*, ed. (pace H. S. Nyberg) A. N. Nader, 16, trans. 8 (Beirut 1957), indignantly denies the correctness of the attribution of this opinion to Abû l-Hudhayl al-'Allâf. He mentions that Abû l-Hudhayl assumed that God knew Himself who is infinite.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 165, 171, 188, 484 ff.; Ibn Hāzīm, *Fīṣal*, V, 139; 'Abd-al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsah*, 183.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 37, 70, 169, 171, 222, 298.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Sa'adyāh, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, trans. S. Rosenblatt, 104 (New Haven 1948, *Yale Judaica Series* 1), see Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre*, 72; Maimonides, *Guide*, III, ch. 20, trans. Pines, 481.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. al-Dārimī, *Radd*, 59; al-Ash'arî, *Ibānah*, trans. W. C. Klein, 88, 95 (New Haven 1940, *American Oriental Series* 19); Ibn Hāzīm, *Fīṣal*, V, 139. In the second passage of the *Ibānah*, al-Ash'arî cites Abû l-Hudhayl al-'Allâf as a representative for this view. Cf. also below, p. 142, n. 3. On Jahm's view of God's knowledge, cf. also Khâlid al-'Asâlî, *Jahm b. Safwân*, 108 ff. Baghdād 1965).

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Sa'adyāh, trans. Rosenblatt, 103, see Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre*, 42; Ibn Hāzīm, *Fīṣal*, I, 50. For the Son as "wisdom, knowledge, and truth," cf. Clement

al-Qirḡisānī explains that since God acts, He must be alive by means of a life that is other than Him, and He must be knowing by means of a knowledge that is not like Him. Thus, God's *ilm* and life are two hypostases, and the essence (*jawhar*) is the third. Since knowledge is generated by the knower like as the son is generated by the father, knowledge is the son of God. All this, it is contended, goes back to the Greek word *logos* in that "knowledge" for the Christians is identical with "speech" (*nutq*).<sup>154</sup> The Imām al-Ḥaramayn prefers to use "the word" (*al-kalimah*) in this connection.<sup>155</sup> While there were quite a few Christian Arab authors who equated the Son or the Holy Ghost with wisdom or knowledge, the equation of the persons of the Trinity with divine attributes cannot be traced in the works of the Christian Church Fathers. Neo-Platonic influence has been suggested for its origin, as well as for the origin of the "essential" attributes which are in the center of Muslim theological speculation.<sup>156</sup>

Another line of thought concerning the nature of God's knowledge among early Muslim theologians led to the assumption that it was a "thing" (*shay*'), as maintained by the Zaydī Sulaymān b. Jarīr.<sup>157</sup> Others, that is, the Mujassimah (Jahmīyah?), countered that it was not a "thing," but an "idea" or "concept" (*ma'nā*).<sup>158</sup> An eccentric concept of God's knowledge was developed in much later years by

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of Alexandria, *Stromata*, IV, 317, ll, 21 f., and similar passages. See, for instance, E. F. Osborn, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria*, 38 (Cambridge 1957): "God is undemonstrable and cannot be the object of knowledge; but the Son is wisdom..."

<sup>154</sup> Cf. al-Qirḡisānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-ma'arāqib*, ed. L. Nemoy, 43, 188. 190 (New Haven 1939–43).

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Imām al-Ḥaramayn, *Irshād*, 47.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. H. A. Wolfson, *The Muslim Attributes and the Christian Trinity*, in *Harvard Theological Review*, XLIX (1956), 1–18. Going beyond Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre*, 42, Wolfson adduces a statement of Marius Victorinus, *Adversus Arium*, I, 63 (Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, VIII, 1087D), as the only relevant passage from old Western Christian sources. There, the Trinity is aligned with *esse*, *vita*, and *intelligentia*.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 70, 171.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 213. For a more precise understanding of the term *ma'nā* beyond its literal meaning of "meaning, concept, idea" in the usage of certain speculative theologians, cf. H. A. Wolfson, *Mu'ammār's Theory of Ma'nā*, in *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of H. A. R. Gibb*, 673–88 (Leiden 1965), and R. M. Frank, in *JASOS*, LXXXVII (1967), 248–59. The former tries to equate *ma'nā* with *'arad* "accident," and the latter with both *'arad* and *'illah* "cause."

as-Suhrawardī *al-maqtūl* (d. 587/1191) to conform with his philosophy of illumination. God's knowledge of Himself, according to as-Suhrawardī, is His being a light unto Himself, and His knowledge of things is their being apparent to Him by themselves or by their reflection in the cosmic scheme. God's knowledge is identical with His luminous quality (*nūrīyah*), as are indeed the other attributes of "the Light of lights."<sup>159</sup> As as-Suhrawardī was well aware, all this does not differ radically from other attempts of explaining God's knowledge of Himself and of the world; it was merely a consistent application of his Neo-Platonic ideas of light.

The interminable discussion, sketched so briefly on the preceding pages, was not just an exercise in metaphysical speculation divorced from human affairs. On the human level, the understanding of the concept of God's knowledge was pivotal for deciding whether there could be some degree of freedom for human action or whether rigid predestination had to prevail. If God were to know what human beings were going to do, they could not be held responsible for their actions.<sup>160</sup> If God's knowledge was true omniscience, that is, the knowledge of everything particular and universal; if it was eternal and immutable, man's fate was of necessity determined in all its details. God's knowledge meant more for the problem of human freedom than God's power or God's will. His power and His will could, in theory, be so construed as to leave some choice for human beings. But God's knowledge had to know, if there was a choice, what the outcome was to be, or it was imperfect knowledge, unworthy of God. Thus, there could be no real choice whatever, if God was truly omniscient. A conditional knowledge, in the sense that "God will punish the unbeliever, *if* he does not repent, and lot punish him, *if* he does," was advocated by some Mu'tazilah.<sup>161</sup> The idea does not seem to have met with much favor and acceptance, and deservedly so. The primeval pen has written down all of God's knowledge to the end of days on the well-guarded tablet.<sup>162</sup> "The pen has dried upon the knowledge of God," a well-known

<sup>159</sup> Cf. as-Suhrawardī, *Hikmat al-ishrāq*, ed. H. Corbin. *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques de Shihabaddin Yahya Suhrawardi*. I, 152, 168 (Teheran-Paris 1952, *Bibliothèque Iranienne* 2). Cf. also below, pp. 157 ff.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 37 (Hishām b. al-Ḥakam).

<sup>161</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 182 f., 495.

<sup>162</sup> As, for instance, described by al-Mas'ūdī (?), *Akhbār az-zamān*, 3 f. (Cairo 1357/1938).

*ḥadīth* makes the Prophet say.<sup>163</sup> There can be little doubt that this *ḥadīth*, ancient as it may be, was polemical in nature and defended what was to become "orthodox" Muslim doctrine against attempts to free men from the tyranny of God's knowledge.

The connection of God's knowledge with the concepts of His power and His will could not be overlooked. Alexander of Aphrodisias had already taken notice of its existence in the second century in his treatise "On Providence," which was translated into Arabic by Abū Bishr Mattā (d. 940) and has been preserved only in this Arabic translation. Muslim theologians of the eighth and ninth centuries were fully aware of the relationship between knowledge and power and will as well as of the necessity of somehow restricting God's knowledge in order to assure at least a modicum of human self-determination. Yet, the contention that God does not know what is not, and that He does not know what is before it is,<sup>164</sup> had to give way to the determinist point of view that He knows what is not, and that He knows what is before it is.<sup>165</sup> The radical attempt ascribed to the *ahl at-tashbīh* (meaning the Jahmīyah??) to make room in God's all-encompassing foreknowledge for human freedom of action by making an exception for human actions "which He knows only at the stage of their coming-into-being, because if He knew who would be obedient to God and who would be disobedient and a sinner, He would intervene between sinner and sin,"<sup>166</sup> seems to have found as little of an echo as the more modest formula in favor of a conditional knowledge in God cited above. The difficult problem whether God had the power to go against His previous knowledge and change it, and, specifically, whether as an act of grace (*latīfah*), He had the power to turn a man who He knew would not believe into a believer,<sup>167</sup> appears not to have been capable of a satisfactory solution in the positive sense.<sup>168</sup>

<sup>163</sup> Cf. *Concordance*, I, 350a; ad-Dārimī, *Radd*, 58.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 38, 158 (Abū l-Ḥusayn aṣ-Ṣāliḥī), 219 f., 489; ad-Dārimī, *Radd*, 59, 64.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 162 f.; Ibn Ḥazm, *Fīṣal*, V, 45; Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 190.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 221; Watt, *Free Will*, 117. Cf. also al-Malaṭī, *Tanbīh*, 133, for the denial by a "Qadariyah group" of the existence of divine foreknowledge of the actions and destiny of human beings.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 573 ff.; Watt, *Free Will*, 75, 85. On *lutf*, cf. Imām al-Ḥaramayn, *Irshād*, 300 f.; 'Abd-al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsah*, 518 ff., also his *Mughnī*.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 203 ff., 559 ff.

The Imâm al-Ḥaramayn hit upon the compromise that God had the power to make happen what He knew would not happen. He would be able to bring about the end of the world in this time, although He knows that it will not happen presently. However, this is a possibility in God and is within His power, and remains such; what He knows will not happen, thus definitely will not happen.<sup>169</sup> Whether God's knowledge was identical with His power, was another debated point. Abû l-Hudhayl al-ʿAllâf is said to have suggested that it is wrong to say that God's knowledge is identical with His power, and that it is wrong to say that it is not identical with His power.<sup>170</sup>

Life is in a way prior to knowledge. On the human level at least, it is obvious that nobody can acquire knowledge without being alive.<sup>171</sup> However, proof for the First Principle being alive may, on the other hand, be deduced from Its knowing Its own essence.<sup>172</sup> The existence of knowledge is not compatible with death.<sup>173</sup> While probably posterior to, or coextensive with, life, knowledge is certainly prior to power and will, because only knowledge provides a sensible basis for the exercise of power and will. This would seem to be an anthropomorphic presupposition which may be entirely inapplicable to the Deity, but Muslims mostly took its correctness for granted without much apparent reflection, at least during the earlier stages of the discussion. A late summary of the problems of divine knowledge by al-Ījî mentions, however, as the *muttakallim* proof for its existence God's well ordered actions and His being powerful (*qâdir*) as necessitating His knowledge. And since God's knowledge includes the possible, the necessary, and the impossible, it is wider than His power (*qudrah*), which concerns

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Imâm al-Ḥaramayn, *Irshâd*, 229.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. al-Ashʿarî, *Maqâlât*, 177, 298. For restrictions placed by God's knowledge upon His power, cf. al-Khayyât, *Intiṣâr*, 23, trans., 18 f.; Ibn Ḥazm, *Fîṣal*, IV, 194, 197.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. W. Stark, *The Sociology of Knowledge*, 14 (Glencoe, Illinois, 1958). Cf., however, ʿAbd-al-Qâhir, *Uṣûl*, 5 f., for sectarian views on the existence of knowledge in the dead and in minerals. Also *Uṣûl*, 42 f., on the relationship of life to knowledge, power, etc.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Maqâṣid*, II, 71.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. al-Ashʿarî, *Maqâlât*, 232, 313 f., 678, as against 406, ll., 14 f. Also ʿAbd-al-Jabbâr, *Mughnî*, ed. I. al-Ibyârî, VII, 33 (Cairo 1380/1961). For Maimonides' equation of life and knowledge in God, cf. Maimonides, *Guide*, I, ch. 53, trans. Pines, 122. On the Christian argument for a difference of "life" and "knowledge," cf. al-Bâqillânî, *Tamhîd*, 79 f. Cf. also above, p. 70, n. 2, and below, pp. 320 f., on the identification of knowledge with life.

only the *possibilia*.<sup>174</sup> According to the theory of a Fâtimid-Ismâ'îlî author, who, incidentally, argues for God's strict unknowability and His possession of only negative attributes, life is in the center of a circle whose sectors form an interlocking chain, with no discernible beginning and end, from power, knowledge, intelligence to eternity, oneness, existence, creativity; in this connection, however, it is stated that power necessarily precedes knowledge.<sup>175</sup>

According to Khârijite-Ibâḍite opinion, shared by an-Najjâr and other Mu'tazilah,<sup>176</sup> as reported by al-Ash'arî, God's knowledge determines His will: "God has eternally willed that what He has known will be, will be, and that what He has known will not be, will not be. He wills the acts of obedience and disobedience that He knows (will be)..."<sup>177</sup> A restrictive connection of knowledge and will, on the other hand, is supposed to have been formulated by adherents of the extremist Shī'ah theologian, Shayṭân at-Tâq, as follows: "God knows the things only when He has determined (*qaddara*) and willed them. Before that, it is impossible for Him to know them, not because He is not knowing, but because a thing is not a thing until He determines and establishes it through determination equated with will."<sup>178</sup> The argument that knowledge must precede will was also turned around in the sense that "God does not know a thing until He creates the will. If He creates the will that it be, He is knowing that it will be. If He creates the will that it be not, He is knowing that it will not be. And if He does not create a will that it be, or a will that it be not, He is neither knowing that it will be, nor knowing that it will not be."<sup>179</sup>

God's supposed knowledge has played a large and fateful role in the history of Muslim society and Muslim individuals as the most immovable and least manageable source of determinism. Another important connection of the concept of divine knowledge with human affairs consisted in the fact that the speculation about God's knowledge influenced the speculation about the character of human knowledge. God's knowledge was generally thought of

<sup>174</sup> Cf. al-Ījī, *Mawâqif*, 285–90.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Ḥamīd-ad-dīn al-Kirmânî, *Râhat al-'aql*, ed. M. Kâmil Ḥusayn and M. Muṣṭafâ Ḥilmî, 80 ff. (Cairo and Leiden 1953, *The Ismaili Society Series* C-1).

<sup>176</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 283, 512, 514.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 108, 124.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 37, 489.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 220.



as being different from human knowledge.<sup>180</sup> However, it may be noted that according to Ibn Ḥazm, the Ashʿarites—he also mentions the names of Ibn Fûrak and al-Bâqillânî—assumed that the same definition applied to both the knowledge of God and the knowledge of human beings, thus implying the identity of divine and human knowledge. In fact, while these men make a distinction between the primeval and uncreated (*qadîm*) knowledge of God and the created knowledge of man, which they consider to be of a different order, they state that “the three kinds of knowledge, *i.e.*, the primeval knowledge of God and the two subdivisions of created knowledge, do not differ, inasfar as a thing constitutes knowledge, in being ‘the cognition of an object known as it is.’”<sup>181</sup> Such a statement would seem to be a sufficient justification for Ibn Ḥazm’s contention, although the identity of divine and human knowledge is only in reference to the object known. In another work, Ibn Ḥazm put his relevant objections to the Ashʿarites in these words: “They say that there ought to be no difference in definitions whether they apply to the primeval (*qadîm*) or the created (*muḥdath*). This is a statement that has unbelief as its necessary consequence, for they thereby make the Creator fall under the category of createdness (*ḥudûth*), because everything defined (*maḥdûd*) is finite and composite, and everything composite must be created (*makhlûq*), because it is composed from its genus and its differentia, which makes it to be distinguished from what belongs together under its genus. Thus, they make their Lord out to be created (*muḥdath*)!”<sup>182</sup> However, the general view universally entertained among Muslims certainly was that God’s knowledge was something different, and, we may add, something rather oppressive from the human point of view. The idea of the existence of such overpowering divine knowledge could hardly have been a source of inspiration for feeble human efforts at acquiring knowledge. Yet, the debate of God’s knowledge also included certain elements of human epistemology, such as the question of the identity of self-knowledge

<sup>180</sup> Cf. for instance, Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 189; Maimonides, *Guide*, I, ch. 35, III, ch. 20. trans. Pines, 80, 482.

<sup>181</sup> Cf., Ibn Ḥazm, *Fîṣal*, II, 136, V, 109; al-Bâqillânî, *Tamhîd*, 7, ll. 11 f. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Bilâl al-Ḥanafî discusses whether the definition E-9 (above, p. 61, n. 4) applies only to the knowledge of the *possibilia* or is common to this (human) knowledge and the divine knowledge; the former is said to be the generally accepted opinion.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkâm*, I, 37 f.



with the knowledge of outside objects, or the general problem of abstract knowing as against knowing through sense perception. It also kept alive the discussion of "knowledge" long after nearly all hope had been lost that a secular discussion of the meaning of knowledge would be permitted to continue except in very small, restricted circles. It made knowledge the most discussed item of learned theological speculation, which was so prominent and important that the common people also could not ignore it. By its mere stress on "knowledge," it helped to sustain the value level of the concept and, in fact, endow it with all the awe surrounding the numinous.

#### 4. MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The phrase "knowledge of God" is ambiguous in English, since it may have God as either the subject or the object of knowing. Employing "God's knowledge" for the one, and "man's knowledge of God" for the other, is the somewhat clumsy expedient adopted here in order to avoid ambiguity. In Arabic, an easy syntactic distinction is possible by means of the use of *ʿilm Allāh* for the former, and *al-ʿilm bi-llāh* for the latter. However, *ʿilm Allāh* was also employed, if rarely, for man's knowledge of God, let alone such specialized usages as "theology" or the knowledge God bestows upon mankind of Himself or the like.<sup>183</sup> Fortunately, the context leaves hardly ever much room for confusion. While linguistically close, the two notions moved on greatly different levels. The knowledge possessed by God was treated, as we have seen, as a problem of divine ontology and epistemology. Man's knowledge of God, on the other hand, was by and large considered as something divorced from any rational or pseudo-rational speculation and as constituting an unfathomable mystery of man's emotional being. This applied to man's *ʿilm* of God as well as to his *maʿrifah* "gnosis" of God where the emotional element was preponderant from the outset. It must be stressed again here, as it will be once more soon, that the two terms tended to blend, unless a conscious effort was made to keep them apart. The discussion of whether and of how man can know God has been an unending one in Islam. "Much

<sup>183</sup> This particular usage attaches to *ʿilm Allāh* in the phrase *al-qanāʾah bi-ʿilm Allāh*, frequent in al-Muḥāsibī.

*Maʿrifah* may be followed by a depending genitive as a genitivus objectivus or by the preposition *bi-* without any apparent distinction, but it is always *al-ʿarif bi-llāh*.

talk (and many different opinions) about God are a sign of man falling short of the knowledge (*ma'rifah*) of Him." This remark, attributed to Pythagoras in the Graeco-Arabic gnostic literature, obviously failed to make an impression upon Muslim scholars. Pythagoras is also stated to have expressed himself convinced of "man's potential for a knowledge of God through few words, by not directing his attention to knowing his fellow men but, it seems, through a contemplative withdrawal into himself. This sentiment in a way fell on more fertile soil in Muslim minds.<sup>184</sup>

It has been noted that man's knowledge of God is not mentioned in the Qur'ân.<sup>185</sup> Man knows, or ought to know, all the particulars about God. He knows, or ought to know, that God knows everything (5:97/98), that He sees everything (96:14/14), that He hears and knows (2:244/245), that He has power over everything (2:259/261, 65:12/12). But there is no express statement to the effect that man knows God, using either the root *ʿ-l-m* or the root *ʿ-r-f*. There is one passage in the Qur'ân, the interpretation of which is, however, contested, that might conceivably contain a clue as to the possible reason for the failure of the Qur'ân to speak of man's knowledge of God. This is *sûrah* 20:110/109 which reads: "He (God) knows what is before them and what is behind them, while they do not comprehend it/Him in knowledge (*wa-lâ yuhâtûna bihî ʿilman*)."<sup>186</sup> Some modern translators of the Qur'ân into European languages have taken the view that the pronoun in *bihî* refers to God. Among them were E. H. Palmer (1880), M. Henning (1901), and the most recent English and French translators, R. Bell (1937–39), A. J. Afberry (1955), and R. Blachère (1949–51). The list of those who take the pronoun to mean "it" and to refer | to the preceding relative clauses ("what is before them and what is

<sup>184</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, 62, ll. 4 f. and 11. In Greek, we find: *Gnôsis theou poiei andra brachylogon*, cf. H. Schenkl, *Das Florilegium Ariston kai prôton mathêma*, in *Wiener Studien*, XI (1889), 14, no. 27; also Stobaeus, V, p. VII.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. A. S. Tritton, *Theory of Knowledge in Early Muslim Theology*, in *Woolner Commemoration Volume*, ed. M. Shafi, 253–56 (Lahore 1940). The brief and undocumented article appears to be mainly concerned with man's knowledge of God.

<sup>186</sup> "Comprehend in knowledge" is an attempt at a literal rendering of the Arabic idiom. In fact, it means nothing more than "to know." *Ahâta* "to comprise, to comprehend" indicates intellectual comprehension with or without the qualifying accusative *ʿilman* or *khubran*. In addition to the passage under discussion, only Qur'ân 18:68/67, 91/90, 27:84/86, and 65:12/12 feature such qualifying accusative.

behind them") is much longer. It includes such translators as A. du Ryer<sup>187</sup> and L. Marracci in the seventeenth century, G. Sale and M. Savary in the eighteenth century, L. Ullmann and J. M. Rodwell in the nineteenth century, and, among the most recent scholars, the Russian I. Krachkovsky (1963, published posthumously) and the German R. Paret (1963 [1966]).<sup>188</sup> The reader who consults any of the translations mentioned is not being told that the translators in either case made a rather important choice from the theological point of view. They did so, it seems, rather lightheartedly, without being greatly concerned about the consequences. Muslim commentators were much less sure of the correct understanding of the passage and expressed themselves with considerable hesitation. Aṭ-Ṭabarī thus left it open whether the passage should be interpreted to mean: "His creatures do not comprehend Him in knowledge, in the sense that He comprehends His servants in knowledge, while they do not comprehend Him in knowledge," or whether, as some scholars had thought, the meaning was that "God knows what is before His angels and what is behind them, and His angels do not comprehend in knowledge what is before themselves and what is behind themselves."<sup>189</sup> Aṭ-Ṭabarī's preference seems to go to the first interpretation. The second interpretation becomes necessary only if the subject is assumed to be the angels of whom it must not be said that they do not comprehend God, on the basis of a very uncertain interpretation of the preceding verse ("On that day, intercession will be of no use except [by ?] one to whom the Merciful One permits and whom He likes to speak up") implying that the reference to intercession there rules out human beings as the subject.

Later commentators were definitely influenced by theological considerations concerning God's knowledge. Their preference would seem to go to the interpretation of the pronoun as having as its antecedent the preceding relative clauses. The Zāhirite Ibn Ḥazm, it is true, appears firmly convinced that *bihi* refers to the knowledge

<sup>187</sup> The French original uses an ambiguous *le* (with a small *l*), but the English translation (London 1649, p. 105) has "it".

The medieval Latin translation of 1143, published by T. Bibliander (Basel 1543, I, 103, ll. 23 f.), omits the sentence.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. also above, p. 121. The translations mentioned here represent a random selection. No attempt has been made to find out whether the explanation of the pronominal suffix as referring to God appears in European translations before that by Palmer.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XVI, 142.

of God which human beings are unable to possess in its entirety. For anything that can be comprehended by knowledge in its entirety would have to be limited and finite, and God, of course, is neither limited nor finite. Ibn Ḥazm is also inclined to interpret the phrase "some of His knowledge" in Qur'ân 2:255/256 as indicating a limited knowledge of God that man may have, if it is given to him by God.<sup>190</sup> For az-Zamakhsharî, who is well known for his Mu'tazilah tendencies, there is also no doubt that *bihî* of 20:110/109 must be combined with *ilmihî* of 2:255/256. However, in both instances, *ilm* is to be understood in the sense of *ma'lûm* "object known."<sup>191</sup> No essential knowledge of God is therefore involved in either passage.

Other commentators were often less willing to take a firm stand. A Shî'ah contemporary of az-Zamakhsharî, aṭ-Ṭabarsî, who died in the fifties of the twelfth century, paraphrased the Qur'anic passage as follows: "They do not comprehend God in knowledge, meaning His objects of power and knowledge, or, according to another interpretation, the substance of His majesty (*kunh 'azamatih*) in His essence and His actions. Another interpretation explains 'it' in 'they do not comprehend it in knowledge' as what is before them and what is behind them, except those whom God enables to know (*aṭla'a*) that. That interpretation goes back to al-Jubbâ'î. Another interpretation has it that the passage means: 'They do not perceive it by means of some of the senses, so that their knowledge would comprehend it.'"<sup>192</sup> A specimen of Shî'ah interpretation from much later times may be found in a commentary by the eighteenth-century Yemenite Ṭayyibî-Ismâ'îlî writer, Diyâ'-ad-dîn Ismâ'îl b. Hibatallâh (d. 1173/1760). He interprets the pronominal suffix in *bihî* as referring to His (that is, 'Alî's) knowledge and position (*maqâm*).<sup>193</sup> However, for another late Syrian Ismâ'îlî author, Shihâb-ad-dîn al-Maynaqî, there is no question but that the pronoun refers to God and that the passage offers incon-

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Fîṣal*, II, 133 f., 174 f., see above, p. 121. In the first passage, Ibn Ḥazm paraphrases *ilmih* by *ma'rîfatih*.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. az-Zamakhsharî., *Kashshâf*, I, 278, II, 253.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. aṭ-Ṭabarsî, *Majma' al-bayân fî tafsîr al-Qur'ân*, VII, 31 (Teheran 1374). It would seem impossible to understand here "Him", instead of "it".

<sup>193</sup> Ed. R. Strothmann, *Ismailitischer Kommentar zum Koran*, 216 (Göttingen 1955, *Abh. der Akad. der Wiss., Göttingen, philol.-hist. Kl., Dritte Folge, Nr. 31*).

trovertible evidence for God's unknowability.<sup>194</sup> Šūfī authorities, it may be added, such as Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī (d. after the 3208/9308) and Aḥmad b. 'Aṭā' ar-Rūḍhabârī (d. 369/980) had naturally taken the same attitude much earlier in response to the Qur'ānic verse.<sup>195</sup>

The great theologian Fakhr-ad-dīn ar-Râzī (d. 606/1209) preferred the assumption of a connection of the pronoun with the preceding relative clauses, for two reasons, the one syntactical, because a pronoun ought to be taken as referring to the nearest antecedent, which in this case would be the relative clauses rather than God, and the other, homiletical, since the purpose of the phrase is to warn people that whatever they may do is known to God, even if it is not known to themselves.<sup>196</sup> Al-Bayḍawī, finally, about a century later, alluded briefly, as usual, to all the principal interpretations suggested: 1. Their knowledge does not comprehend His store of knowledge. 2. Their knowledge does not comprehend His essence (in this case, *biḥī* "Him" is interpreted to mean "His knowledge" as an essential attribute). And 3. the pronoun refers to one of the two preceding relative clauses, or to both of them (a distinction possibly prompted by the unjustified assumption that if it referred to the two-pronged relative clause, it ought to be in the dual), "since they know neither the totality of it nor part of what they know in detail."<sup>197</sup>

If we dispense with all exegetically or theologically determined subtleties of interpretation, it is perfectly obvious that the pronominal suffix must be understood as "it," according to the common Arabic usage of having a pronoun refer back to a preceding sentence or thought expressed. "It" thus means "their entire fate as known to God." If it were possible to understand the pronominal suffix as referring to God, we might have here the authentic explanation of the reason for the lack of any mention of man's knowledge of God in the Qur'ān. As some of the Muslim interpreters did in fact assume, the reason which made the Prophet hesitant to speak about knowing God would be that man was felt by him to be unable to have a comprehensive knowledge of God. Even without the supporting evidence of Qur'ān 20:110/109, this might very

<sup>194</sup> Cf. al-Maynaqī, *Īdāh*, ed. 'Ārif Tāmīr, 106, 109, 111 (Beirut 1964 [1965]). Cf also below, p. 142, n. 3.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. as-Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 56, 124.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Fakhr-ad-dīn ar-Râzī, *Tafsīr*, XXII, 119 (Cairo 1381/1962?).

<sup>197</sup> Cf. al-Bayḍawī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, ed. H. L. (O.) Fleischer, 606 (Leipzig 1846–48).

well have been the case. If the Qur'ân also never speaks of knowing about (‘*r-f*) God, this might have had its reason in the Prophet's firm conviction of God's manifest existence which did not require man's acknowledgement or needed to be made one of the subjects of the Prophetical preaching. Yet, all this is quite uncertain. For all we know, the assumption of mere chance may be the preferable explanation for the absence of any mention in the Qur'ân of man knowing God.

In his philological discussion of the Qur'ânic vocabulary, ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahâni stated that it could well be said that “someone knows about (‘*r-f*) God,” but it would not be possible to say that “someone knows (‘*l-m*) God,” because the human knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) God derives from reflection about the observable signs of His works but is not, as the term *ilm* would imply of necessity, a perception of His essence.<sup>198</sup> This kind of reasoning is hardly applicable to the language and intellectual climate of the Qur'ân. Nor is it a distinction that could be said to fit the later history of the idea of man's knowledge of God in Islam in any consistent manner. *Ilm* and *ma'rifah* came to be employed with little tangible distinction in this respect, although *ma'rifah* may appear to have been the term more commonly used. The real distinction derived from the various purposes connected with the notion of knowing God in the minds of those who spoke about it. The subject as such was taken up and discussed in Islam at a very early date, even if it did not constitute a topic of discussion in the Qur'ân. This is hardly surprising, seeing that it had engaged the mind of man since pre-historic times and was particularly alive in Christian circles,<sup>199</sup> whence some stimulus for its discussion might have come to Muslim scholars.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahâni, *Mufradât*, III, 103, cf. above, pp. 114 f. Similarly also ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahâni, *Tafsîr*, as quoted on fol. 1a of the Istanbul Ms. Carullah 2080 (above, p. 39, n. 2).

For the Judaeo-Christian view that God is known by His works and His creation, cf., for instance, the early ninth-century Job of Edessa, who argued that, therefore, our knowledge of the causes of created beings was the knowledge of them as well as of God (*Book of Treasures*, ed., trans. A. Mingana, 298a, trans., 2 f. [Cambridge 1935]).

<sup>199</sup> Cf., for instance, E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 3 (Leipzig-Berlin 1913). Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, I, 8, refers to the relevant Pauline passages on (*epi*)*gnôsis* and to the *da'at* 'elôhîm of the Old Testament. He feels, however, that they express the idea of a divine wisdom taught to human beings.

The knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) God belonged, as we have seen, to the earliest stages of the attempts to define "faith."<sup>200</sup> Ignorance of God was said to constitute unbelief (*kuff*).<sup>201</sup> In his anti-Christian polemic, Ibn Ḥazm contended that the statement, "Only the Father knows the Son, and only the Son knows the Father" (Matthew 11:27), held the implication that nobody else knew God, and this would mean that everybody is an unbeliever.<sup>202</sup> Ibn Ḥazm's remarks were an echo of the lengthy discussion into which the Church Fathers had been forced to enter in order to combat such an unacceptable interpretation of the Gospel.<sup>203</sup> Already some Khârijite sects are said to have debated the question whether knowing God by only some of His names sufficed for the knowledge of God and true belief.<sup>204</sup> The existence of an unknowable quiddity of God was a point of issue between the Mu'tazilah and their opponents.<sup>205</sup> Abû l-Hudhayl al-'Allâf and an-Najjâr, we are told, saw in the beatific vision of God a form of knowledge of Him. It is permissible for God to transfer the eye to the heart and give it the power of knowledge (*ilm*), so that the heart may know through it; this knowledge then is seeing God in a beatific vision, and that is knowing Him.<sup>206</sup> According to al-Jubbâ'î, God's description as "existing" (*mawjûd*) meant that He was an object of knowledge or knowable (*ma'lûm*),<sup>207</sup> a reversal of the theory that every object of knowledge was existent. In later centuries, little remained to be said about the subject from the majority point of view. As explained by ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahânî, God was recognizable by His works. An intimate, essential knowledge of Him was not possible. Corresponding to the Qur'ânic contention that man can know only what God wants him to know, a Hermetic saying reported by al-Mubashshir made the point that human beings would not be constituted to achieve knowledge (*ma'rifah*) of the majesty of God, were it not for the fact that He has made Himself

<sup>200</sup> Cf. above, pp. 99 f.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 100, 132.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Fîṣal*, II. 32. For whatever it may be worth, it may be noted that the Arabic Bible uses 'r-f, instead of 'l-m (ed. Rome 1671; ed. P. de Lagarde, Leipzig 1864).

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 74 ff., 390.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 96 f.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 206.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 216, 285.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 520, ll. 13 ff.

knowable to them through the divine revelation of prophets.<sup>208</sup>

When Muslim philosophers in the Aristotelian tradition spoke about knowing God, they referred to the various proofs for God's existence.<sup>209</sup> The true debate on man's knowledge of God came from what is comprehensively called "mysticism," a conglomerate of a wide variety of outlooks on religious phenomena. Among mystics, the knowledge of God was a crucial concept. For them, it included as a rule the entire process of mystic "gnosis" and constituted the final culmination of it. Much of the debate had its roots in the ancient conception of the cognition of like through like. In Antiquity, this theory was widely (if, it seems, wrongly) believed to have originated with Pythagoras and his followers. However this may have been, it played a considerable role in Greek epistemological speculation and is encountered under many disguises.<sup>210</sup> It obviously entailed the exclusion of any knowledge of God by man, unless it was assumed that man possessed in himself some part of the divine, enabling him to "assimilate to the divine" (*homoiosis theôi*) and to obtain at least some imperfect knowledge of God. Such was, indeed, the accepted doctrine of Neo-Platonists, mystics, and Christians in late Antiquity. From there, it passed on directly to the Muslims. Sûfism, deeply committed as it was to the basic inowability of God, at times succumbed to the harsh realization that a knowledge, of God was possible only for God Himself.<sup>211</sup> Usually, it avoided this realization, which was incompatible with its very being, by stating expressly that it was the *true* knowledge of God, the knowledge of the divine reality (*ḥaqīqah*), that was unattainable to human beings. A few words of al-Ghazzâlî develop the ancient theory of *homoion-homoiōi* in its application to the knowledge of God in a manner eminently comprehensible to the

<sup>208</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, 11.

<sup>209</sup> Thus, for instance, Abû l-Barakât, *Mu'tabar*, III, 130, entitled a chapter: "On the scientific (*ilmīyah*) methods by which man by means of his knowledge (*ilm*) comes to the knowledge (*ma'rīfah*) of God."

<sup>210</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, *Der Gedanke der Erkenntnis des Gleichen durch Gleiches in antiker und patristischer Zeit*, in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, Suppl., II (1923), 65–76, and the substantial elaboration of the subject by C. W. Müller, *Gleiches zu Gleichem, ein Prinzip frühgriechischen Denkens* (Wiesbaden 1965, *Klassisch-philologische Studien*, Heft 31). Cf. also H. Merki, *Homoiosis Theôi: Von der platonischen Angleichung an Gott zur Gottähnlichkeit bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Freiburg, Switzerland, 1952), where, however, no attention is paid to the epistemological implication.

<sup>211</sup> See below, p. 140.



popular mind of his days: "First of all, it must be realized that only God truly knows about Himself (*ya'rif haqq ma'rifatih*) and fully comprehends the essence of His majesty. This need not be considered strange. For I say, only an angel truly knows about angels. Only a prophet truly knows about prophets. Indeed, only a scholar truly knows about scholars. I would even say that as long as a student has not attained his professor's rank in scholarship, he does not truly know his professor. When he has attained his professor's rank, he knows him almost in the way the professor knows himself... I would even say that it cannot be conceived that an impotent man could truly know about the condition attained by a person during cohabitation..." Al-Ghazzâlî goes on to say that even for low animal life such as ants and gnats, it must be assumed that any true knowledge of their being is possible only for ants and gnats, that man has no true knowledge of himself and as a rule knows about himself only through the actions and characteristics of his self (soul), while ignoring its quiddity, "and once man knows that he is of necessity unable to perceive<sup>212</sup> the essence of God's majesty, he has attained what is the end of his perfection, as this is the goal of human perfection."<sup>213</sup>

The need for the divine spark in man in connection with his knowing of God through the medium of knowing himself is at the core of the famous pseudo-*ḥadīth*, at times endowed with great holiness, "He who knows about (ʿ-r-f) himself, knows about His Lord." It was eagerly embraced by Muslim mysticism. In pre-Islamic times, we find its closest model in the *Paedagogus* of Clement of Alexandria (*heauton gar tis ean gnōi, theon eisetai*), where the variation between *gignōskein*, the traditional verb for self-knowledge, and *eidenai*, for the knowing of God, may be noted.<sup>214</sup> The idea of *gnōthi seauton* as a means for understanding the mysteries beyond the human self did not require specific mystical implications in any technical sense. There were none, for instance, in the para-

<sup>212</sup> Here, al-Ghazzâlî comments on the maxim discussed below, p. 141.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Masâ'il fi ma'rifat Allâh*, ed. N. A. Faris, in *al-Abḥâth*, XIV (1961), 206–22, especially, 208 f.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, III, 1 beg., ed. O. Stählin, I, 325 (Leipzig 1905). For references to the sources and some of the innumerable occurrences of the maxim, cf. F. Rosenthal, in *Islamic Culture*, XIV (1940), 409 f., and, especially, XV (1941), 393; C. A. Nallino, *Raccolta di scritti*, II, 279, 339 f. (Rome 1939–48); Merki, *Homoiōsis Theōi*, 174; H. Ritter, *Das Meer der Seele*, 618 f. (Leiden 1955). Cf. also below, p. 186, n. 1.

phrase presented by the ninth-century physician and convert from Christianity, 'Alī b. Rabban aṭ-Ṭabarī, in his medical encyclopaedia: "The philosopher, Aristotle, says that the knowledge (*ʿilm*) of the rational soul is more important than any other kind of knowledge (*ʿulūm*), because he who knows about (*ʿ-r-f*) the soul knows about his own essence, and he who knows about his own essence has the potential to know about God (*maʿrifat Allāh*)."<sup>215</sup> Thus, it seems also not necessary to think of a philosopher like Abū l-Barakāt as writing in the Ṣūfī spirit, even though he employs unmistakable Ṣūfī terminology, when he says: "The ladder of man's knowledge about (*maʿrifah*) his Lord is the knowledge of himself, for the latter is the first chapter of the knowledge of (*ʿilm bi-*) the world of divine lordship."<sup>216</sup> Yet, the famous maxim of the relationship of the knowledge of self and the knowledge of God appealed especially to the Ṣūfīs and was wholeheartedly welcomed by them, in particular, by the highly influential Ibn 'Arabī. From the Muslim theological point of view, as it concerned the meaning of the concept of God, it was a highly doubtful pronouncement. However, the danger of any direct conflict with orthodox opinion was not great on account of the vagueness of the meaning and true implications of "self-knowledge."

Ṣūfism, as we shall see, wrestled hard and unceasingly with both *ʿilm* and *maʿrifah*. For Ṣūfīs, both terms in connection with God meant primarily man's knowledge of God. While one may translate *ʿilm* by "knowledge" and *maʿrifah* by "gnosis,"<sup>217</sup> the

<sup>215</sup> Cf. 'Alī b. Rabban aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Firdaws al-ḥikmah*, ed. M. Z. Siddiqi, 60 (Berlin 1928).

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Abū l-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, III, 99. See S. Pines in *Scripta Hierosoly-mitana*, VI (1960), 171–76. For Ibn Rushd's use of the maxim, cf. Nallino, *Raccolta*, II, 469.

<sup>217</sup> There is the not uncommon use of *ʿilm al-maʿrifah* "the science of gnosis," employed, for instance, by Abū Ṭālib al-Makki in his *Qūt* (for *ʿilm al-maʿrifah* and *maʿrifat al-maʿrifah*, cf. also below, p. 167). Understandably, the reverse, *maʿrifat al-ʿilm*, was less current, but cf. al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī (above, p. 38, n. 3), fol. 61a, speaking of the occupation with "the cognition of the knowledge of God" (*maʿrifat al-ʿilm bi-llāh*). In 'Alī's exhortation of Kumayl (below, p. 256, n. 5), the phrase *maʿrifat al-ʿilm* apparently refers to the cognition of knowledge as a recommendable rule (*dīn yudān bih*), although a somewhat different interpretation (the knowledge about the excellence, or the honor, or the necessity, of knowledge being a religious duty) was given by Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, V, 436. For a further and more detailed discussion of the various meanings of *maʿrifah* and *ʿilm* for Ṣūfism, see below, chapter VI.

A seemingly strange juxtaposition of *ʿilm* and *maʿrifah* occurs in the beginning of the

distinction was often, but by no means always, small or non-existent. The ninth-century mystic Abû Sa'îd al-Kharrâz employed the two terms next to each other as apparent synonyms.<sup>218</sup> People who follow the stations set up by al-Kharrâz reach "the high station, and the knowledge (*'ilm*) of God, and the noble station, and, as a result, they will get to joy and ease, and to being favored with the knowledge (*ma'rifah*) of God..."<sup>219</sup> Both the *'ilm* and the *ma'rifah* of God may be possessed to a greater or smaller degree by human beings, and thereby they are distinguished in virtue and excellence.<sup>220</sup> Al-Junayd used both *ma'rifah* and *'ilm* for the knowledge of God.<sup>221</sup> The desire to find an early Islamic precedent shows in the attribution to Umm ad-Dardâ', a woman traditionist of the first century of the hijrah, of the following remark: "The most excellent knowledge (or science, *'ilm*) is the gnosis (*ma'rifah*)." This remark supposedly prompted an unidentified poet to rhyme:

Best of us is the one most excellent in knowledge (*ma'rifah*)  
And whenever a human being knows about (*'-r-f*) God.<sup>222</sup>

At the peak of human gnosis, man's knowledge of God may appear associated with the love of God. An early Şûfî is said to have remarked that he loved God, because God had bestowed upon him, among other favors, his knowledge of Him.<sup>223</sup> And a writer on mystic love mentions a group holding the opinion that "love is *ma'rifah*" and that *ma'rifah* "occurs after the full realization of love."<sup>224</sup> The combination of the knowledge of God with His love was, of course, as little restricted to Şûfism<sup>225</sup> as that of the knowledge

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chapter on knowledge in az-Zamakhshari's *Rabî'* (Ms. Yale L-5, fol. 183a; al-Ibshîhî, *Mustatraf*, I, 23), where it is said in praise of knowledge that "through knowledge (*'ilm*) God is known (*'-r-f*) and His oneness acknowledged." *'Ilm* is here again the theological information through which it is possible to know about God.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. al-Kharrâz, *Ṣidq*, 41, 70, 73, but cf. Abû Nu'aym, *Hilyah*, X, 247.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. al-Kharrâz, *Ṣidq*, 60, trans., 49.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. al-Kharrâz, *Ṣidq*, 61, trans., 50.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, 96 ff. (London 1962, *E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series*, N.S. 22). For al-Ghazzâlî's occupation with *'ilm* and *ma'rifah*, cf. Jabre, *La Notion de certitude*, 143 f.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi'*, II, 40.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. al-Kharrâz, *Ṣidq*, 50, trans., 41.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. ad-Daylamî, *Kûtab 'Atf al-alîf al-ma'lûf 'alâ l-lâm al-ma'tûf*, éd. J. C. Vadet, 52 (Cairo 1962).

<sup>225</sup> Cf. above, p. 100; M.-L. Franz, *Aurora Consurgens*, 180 (New York 1966, *Bollingen Series* 77): "...many (medieval) philosophers supposed that every act of cognition was preceded by a kind of 'love' or 'natural appetite' of the knower for the object."

of God with the fear (*khashyah*) of Him which is attested in the Prophetic traditions as well as among Ṣûfî authors.<sup>226</sup>

For the author of a little booklet of maxims, Ibn ‘Aṭā’llâh al-Iskandarî ash-Shâdhilî (d. 709/1309), a man’s reliance upon his possession of the knowledge (*‘ilm*) of God is sufficient protection for him against all the harm the world might do to him, whereas anyone who wants more than such knowledge suffers more harm than all the malice of the world taken together could do to him.<sup>227</sup> The knowledge of God is for Ibn ‘Aṭā’llâh the true meaning of mystic union. This is the way he expressed this idea: “Your reaching your Lord means your reaching the knowledge of Him (*al-‘ilm bih*). Except for that, God’s majesty excludes that anything might unite with Him, or that He might unite with anything.”<sup>228</sup>

In fact, the possibility or impossibility of man’s knowledge of God depended in Ṣûfî thinking upon the various views concerning the general relationship of man to the divine. Where union was considered attainable, or where monistic doctrines entered the field, some human knowledge of God was automatically admitted. But at the same time, it could also be said bluntly that “only God knows God.”<sup>229</sup> Abû Yazîd al-Bisṭâmî felt that the claim to “gnosis with regard to the essence, of the Truth (= God) was ignorance,” and the claim to “knowledge with regard to the reality of gnosis was a crime.”<sup>230</sup> The mystic Abû ‘Alî Ibn al-Kâtib, who lived in the

<sup>226</sup> Cf. Psalms 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; *Concordance*, IV, 319b66, 330b60; al-Muḥâsibî, *Ri‘âyah*, ed. M. Smith, 282, ll. 15 f. (London 1940, *E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series. N.S.* 15), in the name of ‘Abdallâh (b. Mas‘ûd); al-Ḥakîm at-Tirmidhî, *Khatm al-awliyâ’*, 405, cf. also the editor’s introduction, 41; Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣâdiq, *Miṣbâh*, 81 (above, pp. 91 f.); Ibn ‘Aṭā’llâh, *al-Hikam al-‘Aṭâ’iyah*, 59, n. 233 (Damascus, n.y. [1965 ?]). One may also compare the Hermetic, *Hê gar eusebeia gnôsis estin tou theou*, quoted in Greek from Lactantius in A. D. Nock and A. J. Festugière, *Corpus Hermeticum*, IV, 110 (Paris 1945–54), where, however, the reference to a *testimonium Latinum* is entirely out of place, since it turns out to be a passage from al-Mas‘ûdî, *Murûj*, II, 379 (Cairo 1346) which reads: *Man ‘arafa dhâtahû ta’llaha* “he who knows about his own essence becomes godlike.” Cf. also below, p. 165, n. 1, and, for some remarks on the fear and love of God, Mir Valiuddin, *The Ṣûfî Concept of Knowledge*, in *Studies Islam*, II (1965), 144–152.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. Ibn ‘Aṭā’llâh, *Hikam*, 59, no. 234.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. Ibn ‘Aṭā’llâh, *Hikam*, 55, no. 213.

<sup>229</sup> Cf. Ibn Khaldûn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal, III, 97. Cf. also al-Qônawî, *Ijâz al-bayân*, 49, 173.

<sup>230</sup> Cf. as-Sahlaïjî, *Kitâb an-Nûr*, ed. ‘Abd-ar-Raḥmân Badawî, *Shatahât aṣ-Ṣûfîyah*, 133 (Cairo 1949). Also Abû Nu‘aym, *Hilyah*, X, 37. In as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 74, “crime” is

first half of the tenth century, made a brilliantly phrased comparison of the Šûfî attitude toward the unknowability of God with that of the rationalistic theologians: "The Mu'tazilah declared God to be remote rationally, and they proved wrong. The Šûfis declared God to be remote for knowledge, and they proved right."<sup>231</sup> The intellect itself was unable to state who God was, until God anointed its eyes with the light of divine uniqueness, for, as al-Kalâbâdhî developed this theme, the only guide to God and the knowledge of God is God Himself.<sup>232</sup> Aḥmad b. 'Aṭâ' distinguished between two *ma'rifahs*, of God, the *ma'rifah* of truth (*ḥaqq*) and the *ma'rifah* of reality (*ḥaqîqah*). The former, being the cognition of God's oneness through His names and attributes, is possible for human beings, whereas the latter is unattainable to them.<sup>233</sup> For Ibn 'Arabî, knowledge of the reality of the divine essence is precluded. "Knowledge of God" means the knowledge of His existence, which is nothing other than His essence. Yet, His essence is unknowable, and only the attributes of ideas and perfection ascribed to Him can be known.<sup>234</sup>

Another maxim most tellingly expresses the dilemma caused by the gap between the mystic's emotional and intellectual claim to nearness to God and the unknowability of God. This is the famous maxim which proclaims that "the inability to perceive is perception."<sup>235</sup> An Ismâ'îlî paraphrase of it put into the mouth of Ja'far aṣ-Šâdiq the statement that God has turned the Muslims' acknowledgement of their inability to know (*ma'rifah*) Him into faith on their part in Him.<sup>236</sup> The maxim was also ascribed anachronistically to the caliph Abû Bakr who said in a sermon: "Praised be God who prepared the way for man's knowledge of Him (*ma'rifatih*) just through his inability of attaining a knowledge of Him."<sup>237</sup> For Abû Ṭâlib al-Makkî, one of those who quoted Abû Bakr's

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replaced by "confusion." See also H. Ritter, in *Westöstliche Abhandlungen R. Tschudi*, 214 (Wiesbaden 1954).

<sup>231</sup> Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 386 f.: al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 27, ll. 18 f. (Cairo 1367/1948), in the note on Abû 'Alî.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. al-Kalâbâdhî, *Kûlûb at-Ta'arruf*, trans. A. J. Arberry, 46–50 (Cambridge 1935).

<sup>233</sup> Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma'*, 56. See also above, p. 133, n. 2.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. Ibn 'Arabî, *Futûḥât*, I, 118 f. Cf. also the long passage from the *Futûḥât*, pp. 180 ff.

<sup>235</sup> Cf. Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre*, 444 f.; Ibn Khaldûn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal, III, 39.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. al-Maynaqî, *Îdah*, 107.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma'*, 57; Abû Ṭâlib al-Makkî, *Qût*, III, 129, ll. 4 f. See below, p. 190.

alleged remark, it expressed in a nutshell the true oneness of God.

Thus, man's knowledge of God, or his ignorance of God which done can be called knowledge in this connection,<sup>238</sup> was above all a mystic concern in Islam. It is to be understood as the most essential part of the mystic endeavor and of the mystic concept of knowledge in general. With its emphasis on the desirability and, basically, possibility of knowing God through some sort of essential knowledge or gnosis, mysticism attempted to fill a vacuum left by the theologians and provided for the discussion of an aspect of knowledge which was all but read out of existence by the various concepts of God's being and knowledge evolved in the theological debate about the divine attributes. The majority consensus, however, reached eventually was again expressed clearly and forcefully by al-Ghazzâlî: "The knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) God is the end of every cognition (*ma'rifah*) and the fruit of every knowledge (or science, *ilm*) according to all schools of thought."<sup>239</sup> There is no true knowledge of God for man, but human knowledge can achieve some realization of His being.

## 5. SHĪ'AH NOTIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

At the present limited stage of our knowledge of authentic Shī'ah literature, it does not seem possible to make many meaningful distinctions between the various Shī'ah groups in dealing with Shī'ah notions of "knowledge." In spite of the great differences in outlook and attitude that prevailed among the Shī'ah, much of what will be said here would seem applicable to most of them. Naturally, more attention has been paid to what would appear to be views of a more radical character, as it is there that we encounter the more different and, therefore, more noteworthy ideas. As we have seen, Shī'ah groups and individuals participated in the discussion of God's knowledge.<sup>240</sup> They also participated in

<sup>238</sup> Cf. Ibn 'Arabî, *Futûhât*, II, 160, 170. For Pierre Charron in the seventeenth century, "la vraye cognoissance de Dieu est une parfaite ignorace de luy. S'approcher de Dieu est le cognoistre lumière inaccessible," cf. his *Trois veritez*, 26 (Paris 1595), quoted here from Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, 58 f.

<sup>239</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mîzân al-'amal*, ed. S. Dunyâ, 351 (Cairo 1964). For the disputed authenticity of the work, cf. W. M. Watt, in *JRAS*, 1952, 24-45, and M. Bouyges and M. Allard, *Essai de Chronologie des œuvres de al-Ghazali*, 30 n. (Beirut 1959).

<sup>240</sup> Cf. above, pp. 118 ff. For a brief treatise discussing the divine attributes ascribed to the Zaydî imâm, Yaḥyâ al-Hâdî ilâ l-Haqq, cf. C. van Arendonk, *De opkomst van het*

featuring prominently the concept of knowledge in collections of traditions.<sup>241</sup> In Ismâ'īlism at least, influences from Greek philosophy, principally Neo-Platonic, made knowledge and the sciences a constantly recurring theme. While the *ẓāhir*, the outward appearance, of everything is what is observed by the senses, the *bāṭin*, the inner reality, depends for its establishment on knowledge.<sup>242</sup> For a man like Nāṣir-i-Khosraw in the eleventh century, faith and knowledge were almost identical concepts.<sup>243</sup> More or less peculiar to Shī'ism were such matters as 1. the special knowledge possessed by "Alī and the imāms among his descendants; 2. the use of *ma'rifah* for the knowledge of the essentials of Shī'ah beliefs (which in a way parallels the early use of *ma'rifah* in the definition of "faith"); 3. the esoteric symbolism of knowledge, which seems to have been restricted by and large to Ismâ'īlism; and 4. the particular manner in which secular knowledge was related to religious concerns.

1. Religious knowledge was, of course, stressed in Islam generally as a qualification for the leadership of the Muslim community, but the extraordinary role played by the Shī'ah imāms led to sometimes extravagant claims for them as depositories of all knowledge natural as well as supernatural. In keeping with its early origins antedating the development of Shī'ah extremism, Zaydī theory exhibits moderate views also in this respect. The extent of the Zaydī imāms' knowledge and independent judgment (*ijtihād*) is in principle, limited to the ability of following and evaluating the scholarly discussion.<sup>244</sup> Thus, the knowledge required of them is not really much different from what is required of the caliphs

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*Ẓaidiyyat al-Imāmat al-Yamaniyya*, 250, 263 (Leiden 1919), French trans., 287 (Leiden 1960). Cf. also the treatment of the divine attributes by al-Maynaqī, *Īqdāh*, 83 ff., 106–11 (above, pp. 132 f.): God is unknowable, and consequently, He can be said to be knowing only metaphorically, and not in reality. He can also not be said to be knowing in the sense of the definition of knowing as possessing knowledge. God knows through His essence, and not through a knowledge. If the divine knowledge were identical with God, it would be possible to invoke God by saying, "O knowledge, provide for us..." (and this is something that is obviously not done). For the last item, cf. the remarks ascribed to Abū l-Hudhayl al-'Allāf in al-Ash'arī, *Ibānah* (above, p. 122, n. 9).

<sup>241</sup> Cf. above, pp. 91 f., 94.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. the Qāḍī an-Nu'mān, *Asās at-ta'wīl*, ed. 'Arif Tāmīr, 28 (Beirut, n.y. [1960]), apparently a quotation from the same author's *Kitāb Ḥudūd al-ma'rifah*.

<sup>243</sup> Cf. Bertels, *Nasir-i Khosrow*, 202 ff., 229.

<sup>244</sup> Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsah*, 752; Arendonk, *Opkomst*, 249, French trans., 273.



according to the orthodox theory of the caliphate. This, however, was exceptional in Shī'ism. The knowledge of the caliphs which was one of the required qualifications for their high office is in no way comparable to that attributed to Shī'ah imāms.

According to an apocryphal *ḥadīth* no doubt of Shī'ah inspiration, the Prophet has said, "I am the city of knowledge, and 'Alī is its gate."<sup>245</sup> 'Alī was undisputedly the most excellent and knowledgeable representative of the Muslim nation.<sup>246</sup> On the other hand, 'Alī's knowledge was also considered equal to that of the Prophet.

<sup>245</sup> Cf., for instance, al-Malaṭī, *Tanbīh*, 20; al-Buhlūlī, *Sharḥ Qaṣīdat as-Sāhib Ibn 'Abbād*, ed. M. H. Āl Yāsīn, 100 (Baghdād 1967); the apocryphal *Questions of the Monks addressed to 'Alī*, ascribed to Salmān al-Fārisī, in the Istanbul Ms. Hasan Hüsnü Paşa 976, 4. The *ḥadīth* is also alluded to in a poem ascribed to as-Sayyid al-Himyārī (cf. the edition of his collected poems by Shākir Maḥmūd Shukr, 58, Beirut, n.y. [1966?]). Rashīd-ad-dīn Faḍlallāh commented on it in his *Bayān al-ḥaqā'iq*, cf. E. Quatremère, *Histoire des Mongols*, I, p. CLVI (Paris 1836). At the beginning of his *Risālat al-Idāh*, the Ṭayyibī-Isma'īlī Yemenite, 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walīd (d. 612/1215), added a description of the imāms, the descendants of al-Ḥusayn, as "(fertile rain) clouds of knowledge", cf. R. Strothmann, *Gnosis-Texte der Ismailiten*, 138 f. (Göttingen 1943. *Abh. der Akad. d. Wiss., Göttingen, Philol.-hist. Kl., Dritte Folge, Nr. 28*). Abu Nu'aym, *Hilyah*, I, 61, speaks of 'Alī as "the gate of the city of knowledge and the sciences" (*al-ilm wa-l-'ulūm*). Cf. Ibn Taymīyah, *Fatāwī*, I, 465–474 (Cairo [1966?]), etc.

*Madīnat al-ilm* occurs as a book title and may have been inspired by the *ḥadīth* in the case of the famous tenth-century Shī'ah author, Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Bābawayh al-Qummī, among whose works it is listed, cf. aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 185. This is not absolutely certain, since the expression is also used as an ordinary metaphor even by Shī'ah authors, as, for instance, by Ṣadr-ash-Sharī'ah ath-thānī 'Ubaydallāh b. Mas'ūd (d. 747/1346) who began his work with the words: "Praised be God who gave the city of knowledge an elevated (entrance) gate, a location difficult of access, and a construction resting upon a strong foundation, as well as sturdily built gates, (fortified) castles overlooking the whole, and walls protected against any dislocation" (cf. the Istanbul Ms. Carullah 1350 *mukerrer*). In the introduction of his *Miftāḥ as-sa'ādah*, Ṭāshköprüzādeh described "the city of knowledge" in terms reading, in the somewhat shortened form of a re-worked version: "The city of knowledge is located far away and is made difficult of access by (strong) walls. On the way toward it, there are mountains with difficult tracks, hills with desolate thickets, and far-flung oceans with high waves," cf. Ṭāshköprüzādeh, *as-Sa'ādah al-fākhīrah fī siyādat al-ākhirah*, in Ms. Bursa Haraççı 1043, fols. 17b–18a. It may be added here that the Istanbul Ms. Köprülü, I, 1387, does not have *madīnat al-ilm* in its title, as indicated in *GAL*, II, 453, but *madīnat al-'ulūm* "city of the sciences." It is apparently identical with the abridgment of the *Miftāḥ as-sa'ādah* listed in *GAL*, II, 426, *Suppl.*, II, 633. It was dictated in November 1560 by Aḥmad b. Muṣṭafā b. Khalīl, clearly Ṭāshköprüzādeh himself, who died a few months later.

<sup>246</sup> Cf. al-Malaṭī, *Tanbīh*, 20.



All knowledge was deposited in him by the Prophet, and all the sciences (*ʿulūm*) large and small were his.<sup>247</sup> ʿAlī's knowledge is described as the knowledge of the supernatural, the knowledge of that which will be tomorrow, the knowledge about children still in the mother's womb, the knowledge of the secret doings of people in their own houses. And it was believed by some that all this detailed knowledge was known to all the successive imāms exactly as it was to ʿAlī.<sup>248</sup> The imām is knowing. He knows everything, as he is with regard to all his affairs on one level with the Prophet.<sup>249</sup> But ʿAlī and the imāms after him possessed not only the Prophet's knowledge of this world and the next world. They also were in the possession of additional knowledge such as the Prophet had not possessed. This knowledge, which was greater than the knowledge of the Prophet, was passed on by the imāms in the direct line of their succession. It was a knowledge with which they were born and which they had no need of being taught.<sup>250</sup> Some Shī'ah sect is said to have condemned as unbelievers and polytheists all those who dared to deny the equivalence of the imāms' knowledge with that of the Prophet. In their view, too, the knowledge of the imāms, the descendants of the Prophet, who are "the life (*ʿaysh*) of knowledge and the death of ignorance,"<sup>251</sup> comes to them not through study, but they are taught their knowledge as an act of grace (*lutf*). It grows in them, "just as the rain makes the seed grow."<sup>252</sup> Thus, it is only natural to assume that even the youngest among the chosen ʿAlids possess sufficient knowledge to qualify for the imāmate.<sup>253</sup> While the Zaydīyah believed that the religious knowledge of true belief was shared by all the people,<sup>254</sup> the exclusive status of the imām as the sole possessor and source of all knowledge was more generally recognized. It was, for instance, the pervasive theme in a work ascribed to an early Shī'ite follower of the Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq, al-Mufaḍḍal b. ʿUmar al-Juʿfī. "My Lord,"

<sup>247</sup> Cf. an-Nawbakhtī, *Fīraq*, ed. H. Ritter, 16 (Istanbul-Leipzig 1931, *Bibliotheca Islamica* 4).

<sup>248</sup> Cf. al-Malaṭī, *Tanbīh*, 118.

<sup>249</sup> Cf. an-Nawbakhtī, *Fīraq*, 46.

<sup>250</sup> Cf. al-Malaṭī, *Tanbīh*, 121.

<sup>251</sup> As ʿAlī is supposed to have said, cf. *Nahj al-balāghah*, 439 (Beirut 1382/1963).

<sup>252</sup> Cf. an-Nawbakhtī, *Fīraq*, 49. On *lutf*, much information can be found in ʿAbd-al-Jabbār's *Mughnī*.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. an-Nawbakhtī, *Fīraq*, 74.

<sup>254</sup> Cf. an-Nawbakhtī, *Fīraq*, 50.

al-Ju'fi addresses the Imâm Ja'far, "I have no knowledge except what you have taught me."<sup>255</sup>

This phraseology, as well as some of the expressions employed in the other statements referred to before, was ordinarily used in connection with God's knowledge and the Deity's bestowal of His knowledge upon mankind. This does not necessarily imply that the Shî'ah concept of the knowledge of their imâms involved any kind of deification. The knowledge of the imâms is both natural and supernatural. They may transmit to other human beings as much religious knowledge as they deem necessary and advisable. There is no way for ordinary mortals to acquire valid religious knowledge except through the imâms. However, the element of eternity so crucial for the concept of divine knowledge is absent in the individual manifestations of the imâms' knowledge. The knowledge of the imâms passes through them and does not stay with them as individuals, at least, in their mortal state. Admittedly, the distinction is a rather subtle one, and its existence might not always have been acknowledged, and it might have even been expressly rejected in extremist circles. At any rate, with the incarnation in the imâms of "knowledge," of a knowledge so absolute and superhuman, their supernatural standing is tremendously enhanced and approaches divine status as closely as possible. In the Shî'ah view, knowledge of the highest kind exists continuously on earth with the existence of imâms. Knowledge, and the spreading of knowledge among deserving humans, is the ultimate reason of their being and, consequently, it can be said, of all existence. This surely constitutes an apotheosis of the concept of knowledge hardly matched elsewhere in the Muslim environment.

2. An unusually large number of early Shî'ah works bears the title of *Kitâb al-Ma'rifah*. The lifetime of the authors of these works covered the period from the second half of the eighth century through the early tenth century. Among them we find Shaytân at-Tâq (or, as he was called in Shî'ah circles, Mu'min at-Tâq);<sup>256</sup> Aḥmad b. 'Alî al-'Aqîqî, a sixth-generation descendant of al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alî;<sup>257</sup> Ismâ'il b. Muḥammad al-Makhzûmî of Mecca and Ismâ'il b. Muḥammad Qunburah of Qumm, apparently two different

<sup>255</sup> Cf. al-Ju'fi, *al-Haft wa-l-aẓillah*, ed. 'Arif Tâmir and 'Abduh Khalifé, 29 (Beirut 1960).

<sup>256</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 176, l. 12 = 250; at-Tûsî, *Fihrist*, 158, l. 2.

<sup>257</sup> Cf. at-Tûsî, *Fihrist*, 48, l. 9.

authors;<sup>258</sup> 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan aṭ-Ṭāṭarī;<sup>259</sup> 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Faḍḍāl;<sup>260</sup> Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Sa'īd ath-Thaqafī;<sup>261</sup> 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Balawī;<sup>262</sup> Hishām b. al-Ḥakam;<sup>263</sup> Muḥammad b. al-Khalīl as-Sakkāk;<sup>264</sup> and Abū Sahl an-Nawbakhtī.<sup>265</sup> None of these works is preserved, as far as is presently known. Drawing conclusions from the title of a work as to its contents is always an uncertain enterprise. Thus, a reputed Shī'ah author, 'Abbād b. Ya'qūb ar-Rawājīnī (d. 250/864), is credited with a *Kitāb al-Ma'rifah*, but its subtitle, *fī ma'rifat aṣ-ṣaḥābah* mentioned at the same time, tells us that we are dealing here presumably with a work containing biographical information on early Muslims.<sup>266</sup> However, most of the *Kitāb al-Ma'rifah* appear listed in conjunction with other titles clearly referring to works on topics from the religious law and theology. There can be little doubt that in some if not all of them, *ma'rifah* is to be understood to refer to the knowledge about matters of Shī'ah religious faith and dogma, possibly often with particular reference to the question of the imāmate and the problem of how the incumbent can be recognized as such by the faithful.<sup>267</sup> From a period subsequent to that of the authors mentioned, we hear about a *Kitāb Hudūd al-ma'rifah* by the famous Ismā'īlī-Fāṭimid Qāḍī an-Nu'mān. In another one of his works, the Qāḍī an-Nu'mān describes it as dealing with the Ismā'īlī explanation of the Qur'ān (*ta'wīl*) and the exposition of the *bāṭin* in a polemical vein directed against those who do not

<sup>258</sup> This was the opinion of aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 35, l. 9, 38, l. 9. *Fihrist*, 192, l. 28 = 273, lists only Qunburah. In the notes to Flügel's edition, p. 82, he is considered identical with al-Makhzūmī. For this and other *Kitāb al-Ma'rifah*, cf. also an-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, 12, 22, 65, 163, 179, 182, 186, 235, 237, 305, also, 47, 152, 236.

<sup>259</sup> Cf. aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 118, l. 6. *Fihrist*, 177 = 252, omits the title. This may be due to the defectiveness of the manuscripts on which the available editions are based.

<sup>260</sup> Cf. aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 118, l. 13. The vocalization Faḍḍāl seems uncertain.

<sup>261</sup> Cf. aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 28, l. 8.

<sup>262</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 193, l. 6 = 273; aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 129, l. 9.

<sup>263</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 176, l. 6 = 250; aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 204, l. 11.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 176, l. 16 = 250; aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 158, l. 6.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 177, l. 3 = 251; aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 36, l. 6.

<sup>266</sup> Cf. aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 146, l. 1.

<sup>267</sup> The brief Druze treatise entitled *Dhikr ma'rifat al-imām* deals merely with the "spiritual" and "corporeal" names and designations of the *Qā'im az-zamān* and the *hudūd*. Cf. Silvestre de Sacy, *Exposé de la religion des Druzes*, I, p. CCCCLXXVII (Paris 1838). I consulted the Arabic manuscripts in Yale University Library listed below, p. 151, n. 1 (L-733, fols. 103a-104b, S-46, fols. 60a-61a, and A-64, fols. 82a-83a).

believe in these matters.<sup>268</sup> The Zaydī *Kitāb Haqāʾiq al-maʾrifah* by the Imām Aḥmad b. Sulaymān (d. 566/1170) dealt with the entire spectrum of dogmatic theology.<sup>269</sup> The *maʾrifah* of all these works is clearly related to the use of the word in the definition of “faith.”<sup>270</sup> It constitutes a means to achieve “knowledge” (*ʿilm*) and is part of it, although it is not the fullness of *ʿilm*, which is the highest form of religious realization for the Shīʿah.

The recent emergence of more detailed information on the Muʿtazilah from Ibn an-Nadīm’s *Fihrist* shows clearly that *Kitāb al-Maʾrifah* was the common title of works on the knowledge about God and related metaphysical data at the outset of Muslim theological discussion. It may not be beside the point here to mention the title of the *Kitāb as-Sabīl ilā maʾrifat al-ḥaqq* by Wāṣil b. ʿAtāʾ of the earliest generation of Muʿtazilah.<sup>271</sup> The simple title of *Kitāb al-Maʾrifah* appears in the lists of the works of an-Nazzām,<sup>272</sup> al-Jāhīz,<sup>273</sup> al-Aṣamm,<sup>274</sup> a certain Muḥammad b. ʿAbd-al-Karīm,<sup>275</sup> and al-Ḥusayn. b. ʿAlī al-Baṣrī, called Juʿal.<sup>276</sup> ʿĪsā b. Ṣabīḥ al-Murdār is credited with two *Kitāb al-Maʾrifah* against, respectively, Thumāmah and ash-Shahḥām.<sup>277</sup> Thumāmah’s own work seems to

<sup>268</sup> Cf. an-Nuʿmān, *Asās at-taʾwīl*, 26. The *Kitāb Hudūd al-maʾrifah* is said to be preserved (?), but it is apparently not listed in Sezgin, I, 575–78.

<sup>269</sup> Cf. E. Griffini, in *RSO*, VII (1916–18), 573 f. For the author, cf. *GAL*, *Suppl.*, I, 699.

<sup>270</sup> Cf. above, pp. 99 f. We have here another indication that the use of *maʾrifah* in defining “faith” antedates that of *taṣdīq*. Extremist Shīʿah sets defined “faith” as the *maʾrifah* of the Imām. “He who does not know about (ʿ-r-f) him does not know about God,” cf. an-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 42, 46. According to an apocryphal *ḥadīth*, “he who dies without clearly knowing about (ʿ-r-f) the contemporary Imām dies a *jāhiliyyah* death. “Faith” includes the knowledge (*maʾrifah*) of the *ṣāḥib az-zamān*, cf. al-Maynaqī, *ʾIdāh*, 99 and 34.

<sup>271</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, Persian translation, 293, also in the Houtsma fragment.

<sup>272</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, Persian translation, 299.

<sup>273</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, Persian translation, 308, with related titles, already known from the biography of al-Jāhīz in Yāqūt’s *ʾIrshād*.

<sup>274</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, Persian translation, 313.

<sup>275</sup> Cf. the fragment of the *Fihrist* published by J. Fück, in *ZDMG*, XC (1936), 309.

<sup>276</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 175, ll. 4 f. = 248. As against the suspect dates, 308/920–21 to 399/1008–9, given for Juʿal in the edition of the *Fihrist*, the seemingly correct dates, 293/905–6 to 369/980, appear in *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, VIII, 73 f. The date of death is indicated as 369 also in the Persian translation of the *Fihrist*.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, Persian translation, 301. The vocalization Ṣabīḥ and the form Murdār are uncertain.

have had the plural *ma'ārif* in the title,<sup>278</sup> and a *Kitāb al-Ma'ārif* against al-Jāhīz was written by Ja'far b. Mubashshir ath-Thaqafī.<sup>279</sup> *Ma'ārif* is, also used in the twelfth part of 'Abd-al-Jabbār's *Mughnī* that deals with 'ilm generated by *nazar* and its relation to the various aspects of knowledge about God (*ma'ārif*). The discussion in the *Mughnī* suggests that separate chapters on *ma'rifah* were no doubt to be found in all relevant Mu'tazilah writings,<sup>280</sup> in addition to the monographs on the subject.

3. Allusions to knowledge in many disguises were found by Ismā'īlī thinkers in the Qur'ān and elsewhere in the authoritative religious literature. Thus, the "property" (*māl*) mentioned in the story of Nūh/Noah in the Qur'ān 71:21/20 is to be interpreted esoterically as knowledge.<sup>281</sup> The "water" upon which Noah's ark was floating is likewise to be understood as knowledge. Like as a ship saves its passengers from drowning, thus true believers are saved by the life of the spiritual, light-filled (*rūhānī, nūrānī*) knowledge from the death of unbelief. Like as the ship, in the exoteric meaning of the word, takes its course upon the waters and carries its passengers, thus the true call (*da'wat al-ḥaqq*) takes its course upon knowledge and carries upon it those who enter into it and accept it. In Arabic linguistic usage, we are told, the interpretation of "water" as knowledge is confirmed by the common figure of speech that calls a man of vast knowledge an "ocean." Moreover, the comparison of water and knowledge suggests that just as those who would sail the sea without a ship would drown in it, those who look for knowledge among those who do not have it will perish.<sup>282</sup> Again in connection with the story of Noah, we hear

<sup>278</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, Persian translation, 303.

<sup>279</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, Persian translation, 303. The *Kitāb al-Ma'rifah fī l-ijmā'* by an-Najjār, mentioned in *Fihrist*, 179, l. 28 = 255, may not belong here, neither, it seems, does the *Kitāb al-Ma'rifah* that occurs among the titles of the works of Dāwūd b. 'Alī al-Iṣfahānī az-Zāhirī, cf. *Fihrist*, 217, l. 12 = 305.

<sup>280</sup> Cf. also below, pp. 211 f.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. an-Nu'mān, *Asās at-ta'wīl*, 77. The comparison of *māl* with 'ilm, like that of *mā'* "water" with 'ilm, is a recurring topic in the work.

It may be mentioned here that the divine throne (*kursī*) of Qur'ān 2:255/256 was widely interpreted to mean God's knowledge, cf. aṭ-Tabarī, *Tafsīr*, III, 6f.; az-Zamakbsharī, *Kashshāf*, I. 278 f., etc. Abū Hātim ar-Rāzī, *Zīnah*, II, 151, stressed the Mu'tazilah origin of this interpretation, following Ibn Qutaybah. Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Ikhtilāf fī l-lafẓ*, ed. M. Zāhid al-Kawtharī, 38 f. (Cairo 1349) (where, however, it is not expressly stated that it was "knowledge" that was meant by *kursī*).

<sup>282</sup> Cf. an-Nu'mān, *Asās at-ta'wīl*, 78 f.

it said at a late stage of Ismâ'îlî scholarship that the devil (*iblis*) of Noah was Hâm who saw and showed to his brothers the private parts of his father Noah (the Qur'ân does not refer to this Biblical episode). This means that Hâm revealed to others the knowledge that had come to him from his father and which must not be revealed except to those fit to receive it.<sup>283</sup> In connection with the Qur'ânic story of the Thamûd and their prophet Şâlih (26:155/155), it is stated that *laban* "milk" symbolizes esoteric knowledge.<sup>284</sup> And once more the word *mâl*, in the apocryphal *hadîth*: "A sick man owns one-third of his property,"<sup>285</sup> is explained to refer to knowledge. It is the spiritually sick man who is acquainted only with the knowledge of the ear (*al-'ilm as-sam'î*) but not with the two other *'ilms*, the knowledge of the eye (*al-'ilm al-başarî*) and the heart's knowledge of the realities (*'ilm al-ḥaqâ'iq al-qalbî*). The ownership of all these three parts of knowledge constitutes full knowledge, the full "property" of man.<sup>285</sup> Thus, as these examples show, if everything is properly understood and interpreted according to its real, inner meaning, knowledge is of an even more frequent occurrence than it anyhow is in the Qur'ân and the *hadîth*. In the Shî'ah view, it is the true essence of life, human and superhuman.

4. Finally, it is significant for the Shî'ah outlook on knowledge that it brought about a peculiar synthesis between its religious concerns and the by and large secular interest in the sciences. Again, this is a process which would seem largely confined to Ismâ'ilism. With its strong ties to Hellenistic philosophy dating back to its early beginnings, Ismâ'ilism appears to have been always eager to explain to its followers the supposed scientific basis upon which its religious beliefs rested. The prime example is the *Rasâ'il Ikhwân as-ṣafâ'* and the reception the *Rasâ'il* received in Ismâ'îlî circles. A peculiar religious epistemology of considerable originality was developed in Fâtimid-Ismâ'îlî circles, of which the exposition by Ḥamîd-ad-dîn al-Kirmânî, in his *Râḥat al-'aql*, furnishes us with an interesting example dating from the early eleventh century. To what extremes this trend could lead is well illustrated by the efforts made among the Druzes to tie the system developed for the classification of the sciences to their particular theology. Our evidence is a brief treatise included in the standard

<sup>283</sup> Cf. al-Maynaqî, *Idâh*, 5, also, 74, for *mâ'* = *'ilm*.

<sup>284</sup> Cf. an-Nu'mân, *Asâs at-ta'wîl*, 103. Cf. above, p. 80.

<sup>285</sup> Cf. al-Maynaqî, *Idâh*, 78.

collection of Druze writings, entitled *Risālat Taqṣīm al-ʿulūm wa-ithbāt al-ḥaqq wa-kashf al-maknūn* "The Classification of the Sciences and the Establishment of the Truth and the Uncovering of what is Hidden." If the attribution to Ismāʿīl b. Muḥammad b. Ḥāmid at-Tamīmī is correct, it dates from the first half of the fifth/eleventh century.<sup>286</sup> At-Tamīmī claims to have drawn all his knowledge from the founder of the Druze religion, Ḥamzah b. ʿAlī, who ordered him to compose the treatise and inspired him to accomplish a task, for which his own weak powers he felt would not have sufficed.

According to the Druze writer, the sacred number of five serves as the basic principle for the organization of all *ʿilm*. It is divided into five subdivisions. Two of them are concerned with religious matters (*dīn*), and two with physical data (*ṭabīʿah*). One, the fifth and most important of all, is the true (*ḥaqīqī*) knowledge. This true knowledge is the knowledge that is wanted (*murād*) and that is in keeping with the command of Our Lord al-Ḥākim. While the first four subdivisions are again subdivided into numerous specialties, which are too numerous to mention and there is no point in mentioning them, the fifth knowledge is a unique thing, unalterable, undiminishable, indivisible, and imperishable. The first four subdivisions are called "knowledge" only metaphorically. Reality (*ḥaqīqah*) of knowledge applies to the fifth subdivision. The two subdivisions concerned with religious matters are the exoteric (outward, *ẓāhir*) knowledge and the esoteric (inner, *bāṭin*) knowledge. The representatives of the exoteric knowledge are the five "speakers" (*nāṭiq*), that is, Nūh, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, ʿĪsā, and Muḥammad (Adam is not included), each of whom brought forth a "foundation." The resulting five "foundations" are Sām, Ismāʿīl, Yūshaʿ b. Nūn (after the death of Hārūn), Shamʿūn the Rock (St. Peter), and ʿAlī. Each "speaker" and the "foundation" brought forth by him form a pair, the earlier pair in each case pointing to the one succeeding it. The esoteric knowledge includes the divine mercy (*raḥmah*), whereas the exoteric knowledge includes the divine punishment, in keeping with Qurʾān 57:13/13. The "speaker" is the master of the exoteric aspect, while the "foundation" is the

<sup>286</sup> Cf. Silvestre de Sacy, *Exposé*, I, p. CCCCLXXIX. The manuscripts used are Yale University Library A-64 (Catalogue Nemoy 1070), fols. 110–114, S-46 (Catalogue Nemoy 1069), fols. 74a–84a, and L-733 (Catalogue Nemoy 1066), fols. 128a–148a.



master of the esoteric aspect. Neither by himself is what is wanted. Together they do indicate what is wanted, namely, the fifth knowledge, which also forms a third subdivision of the two subdivisions dealing with religious matters, and this is the esoteric (*al-bâṭin*).<sup>287</sup>

A long excursus follows here. It is triggered by a question raised by the author, to wit, why “being an idea” (*ma‘nawîyah*) is claimed only for ‘Alî, and not for any of the other “foundations.” There were five ages (peoples) before Adam, aṭ-Ṭimm, ar-Rimm, al-Ḥinn, al-Jinn, and al-Binn. Adam and his children by Eve were the true believers in the oneness of God. Adam did not stray from the knowledge (*ma‘rifah*) of the Lord, but he was unable to accomplish the establishment of an exoteric religious law (*sharī‘ah zâhirah*). Subsequently, there was much trouble on earth caused by Iblîs and his hosts, until the first “speaker” made his appearance and established a religious law. He was Nûḥ, and he was called the Second Adam.<sup>288</sup> The following pairs of “speakers” and “foundations” all possessed worldly, that is, secular, knowledge and knew, for instance, medicine, philosophy, astronomy (and astrology) as well as speculative theology (*kalâm*), but they all believed in the recognition of the oneness of non-being (*tawḥîd al-‘adam*) and did not know (‘*r-f*) the Lord. Their strength (understanding, intelligence) was comparable to the various stages of the embryo, reaching the stage of bone with ‘Îsâ-Sham‘ûn, and with Muḥammad-‘Alî and successive ‘Alid imâms the stage of bone covered with flesh in the erect form of man, but without spirit (*rûḥ*). The spirit is the gnosis of the divine oneness (*ma‘rifat at-tawḥîd*). Not having the spirit, even the last of the five pairs of “speaker” and “foundation” cannot be said to have known (‘*r-f*) the Lord. All the while, the Universal Intellect and His “proof” (*ḥujjah*) gave them strength. At the end of the time of the sixth “speaker” and the rising of the seventh “speaker,” the form of the recognition of the divine oneness (*tawḥîd*) reaches perfection. “Uniqueness” (*wahdânîyah*)

<sup>287</sup> The author evidently found it difficult to make the concept of *bâṭin* do for two kinds of knowledge. However, *bâṭin* was the description that had to be applied to the highest, that is, the fifth, knowledge, and it would not have been possible to brand all religious knowledge (*dîn*) as exoteric (*zâhir*), since the Shī‘ah always stressed *bâṭin* as an aspect of *‘ilm ad-dîn*.

<sup>288</sup> The honor of being the second father of mankind also fell to Seth, as discussed in a doctoral dissertation by T. Gluck on the Arabic legend of Seth (Yale University, 1968).



is to be claimed only for 'Alī, in contrast to all the other “foundations.” During his heavenly journey, Muḥammad noticed someone looking like 'Alī (who at the time was of course still alive). It was not 'Alī. It was an angel or an appearance of the Lord, created to look like 'Alī, because the angels felt a deep longing for 'Alī.

After a description of the way in which the seven heavens are assigned to various saints from Fāṭimid pre-history, the author returns to his subject, the classification of the sciences. He recapitulates what he had said before about the metaphorical usage of the word “knowledge” for the religious knowledge of *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* and about the wanted knowledge being a combination of the two, the recognition of the divine oneness of the Lord (*tawḥīd al-Mawḥid*), which was not attained by any “speaker” and “foundation.” In our time, he says, “speaker” and “foundation” are two servants serving Our Lord al-Ḥākim, known to those who know them, and unknown to those who need no knowledge (*'ulūm*).

The two subdivisions that are concerned with matters physical are physical medicine (*'ilm ṭibb aṭ-ṭabī'ah*), which is not explained any further in detail, and the medicine of rational and irrational living beings (*'ilm ṭibb al-ḥayawān*), that is, human beings and dumb animals. The one is practiced by physicians (*mutaṭabbib*), and the other by veterinarians (*bayṭār*). Both are experimenters (empiricists, *mutajarrib*)<sup>289</sup> rather than healers (*mu'ālīj*), because they treat (*'ālaja*) what they have no knowledge of (*-r-f*). They have obtained their knowledge (*'ulūm*) through blindly following (*taqlīd*) the ancient philosophers, in the same manner in which those concerned with exoteric religious knowledge have obtained all their knowledge from the “speakers.” The most physicians are able to accomplish is splitting the belly of man and observing what is inside it, which is not to be compared with the activity of live persons.<sup>290</sup> Therefore, their judgment concerning living, rational human beings cannot be correct. Many physicians have killed people through their

<sup>289</sup> On the many meanings of *tajribah* in medicine, cf. F. Rosenthal, in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, XL (1966), 233, n. 30. The distinction made here is one between the empirical practitioner and the medical theorist.

<sup>290</sup> Lit., “the activity of one killed and dead and whose belly has been split is not like that of one who is alive.” Remarkably enough, the passage would seem to suggest that the Druze author considered all medical knowledge as derived from the dissection of corpses.

treatment. Eye doctors and surgeons have blinded many. Veterinarians have killed many of the animals they have treated. The judgment of physicians is swayed by chance and prejudice (*ahwá'*). For them, this constitutes the best possible argument, whereas in the gnosis of true realities (*ma'rifat al-ḥaqā'iq*), it is the weakest argument there can be.

In sum, medicine, comprising the two subdivisions of physical knowledge, cannot claim to possess "realness" (*ḥaqīqīyah*) any more than the two subdivisions of the religious knowledge, the esoteric and the exoteric. It is the third part of the latter two, or the subdivision of all knowledge, that is the only true knowledge. It is the recognition of the oneness of Our Lord. The fact that it must be the fifth subdivision which constitutes the greatest knowledge of all is confirmed by the superiority that attaches to everything that comes fifth, witness the four natures where the fifth nature is the greatest, the four "proofs" with the imām himself as the fifth, and the combination of units up to four, which requires another odd (*fard*) number to constitute five, the *tawḥīd*, with the first four odd numbers constituting the two even pairs of *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* and with the fifth subdivision outside of them, the knowledge of the recognition of the oneness of the Lord.

In this Druze treatise, "knowledge" is equated with the highest faith. The destiny of mankind is represented as a struggle for knowledge by means of the various scholarly disciplines. The treatise is a fanciful mixture of theosophy and scientific *Wissenschaftslehre*. Needless to say, from the point of view of science and meaningful knowledge, it is a step backward toward frightening primitivism. While pretending to be "esoteric", it reflects in reality an attempt to popularize religious doctrine. But it exemplifies very well the forceful penetration of the concept of "knowledge" into every recess of Muslim thought and emotion.

## CHAPTER SIX

### KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT

(Şûfism)

“Light” has always been a favorite concept of spiritual terminology.<sup>1</sup> In particular, it has served as a metaphor for knowledge as distinct from the darkness of ignorance. When it is dark, we cannot observe or recognize anything. We are kept in ignorance. But when there is light and day, we can find our way around—we know. This simple experience of man was transferred to matters of the mind and spirit at an early date of the most remote history of mankind. For better or worse (for there is always some potential danger in even the most natural and innocent verbalization of the human imagination), the memory of it has stayed alive in man’s consciousness to the present day.

Light was a common symbol in Biblical thought, and throughout later Judaism and Christianity. Light shows the way and provides guidance, as do wisdom and the religious law. “The light of knowledge” (*phôs gnôseôs*) is the mistaken Greek translation, based upon a reading *nêr da‘at*, of an Old Testament passage, Hosea 10:12.<sup>2</sup> The Hellenistic spirit, in its search for lucidity of expression, made much use of the imagery of light. From Heraclitus’ idea of the inescapability of the intellectual light<sup>3</sup>—though the Heraclitean context of these words, reported on his authority many centuries after his time, is doubtful—to the more complicated metaphor embodied in Plato’s myth of the cave, from the Aristotelian quotation of a statement by an unknown author describing the

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, F.-N. Klein, *Die Lichtterminologie bei Philon von Alexandrien und in den hermetischen Schriften* (Leiden 1962), or the discussion on light and darkness in ancient Egypt (E. Hornung), archaic Greek poetry (M. Treu), early Greek philosophy (C. J. Classen), and ancient Iran and ancient Judaism (C. Colpe), in *Studium Generale*, XVIII (1965), 73–133.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. S. Aalen, *Die Begriffe “Licht” und “Finsternis” im Alten Testament, im Spätjudentum und im Rabbinismus*, 69, 93, 188 (Oslo 1951, *Skrifter utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi, Hist.-filos. Kl.*, 1951, no. 1).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 3rd ed. (Berlin 1912), Heraclitus B 16. In Arabic tradition, Heraclitus speaks of “the true light” as the first principle, God (Zeus), cf. ash-Shahrastâni, 296, trans. Haarbrücker, II, 137.

intellect (*nous*) as a light kindled by the deity in the soul<sup>4</sup> to the Neo-Platonists favoring a pervasive light symbolism, all the splendid magic of knowledge was evoked for the Greeks by this word. Dualistic religions centered around the opposition of darkness and light, contrasting man's low, material world of darkness with the glorious world of light on high. "Light," for them, was the element of salvation. The gnostic concept of the "Pistis Sophia," to give one specific example, was identified with light, its primal abode. In one sweeping statement that seems to encompass much of later Muslim mystical thought, we find Pistis ("faith") emanating a picture called Sophia ("wisdom," it would perhaps not be inappropriate in this context to think of "knowledge") which develops "work" that is similar to or identical with the first existing light.<sup>5</sup>

Speaking about "light" was thus entirely natural for the Prophet Muḥammad at the beginning of Islam. Later Islam always faced, and at times succumbed to, the temptation of employing an extensive light symbolism, even in perfectly orthodox circles. The primeval "pen," for instance, is light, and the writing on the well-guarded tablet is a light of God,<sup>6</sup> as the Qur'ân itself was frequently referred to as a light, on good scriptural authority. The light of

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1411b12. Cf. also A. Altmann, in *H. A. Wolfson Jubilee Volume*, I, 60 f. (Jerusalem 1965).

It may be briefly added here that in Islam, the intellect (*'aql*) is also frequently brought into connection with light. Al-Muḥāsibī, to give an example from mysticism, is said to have defined it as a light. It is a light that in human beings is subject to variation in intensity. Cf. also below, p. 172, n. 1. In reporting this view in his *Dhamm al-hawā*, 5 (Cairo 1381/1962) (cf. also p. 273, n. 3), Ibn al-Jawzī expresses his own preference for a definition of *'aql* which within a small compass reveals the truly marvelous capacity for syncretism characteristic of Muslim civilization: "The intellect is a natural ability (*gharīzah*) comparable to a light thrown into the heart (cf. above, p. 71). It (the heart as the repository of the intellect, or the intellect by virtue of its being a luminous human endowment) is thus prepared for the perception of things. It thereby knows that the things permitted are permitted and that the things forbidden are forbidden, and it looks at the consequences of affairs." Light mysticism, philosophical epistemology, theological "knowledge," and practical ethics—a hint of each one of these has been brought here together skillfully to make the intellect a fully naturalized citizen of Islam.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. A. Böhlig and P. Labib, *Die koptisch-gnostische Schrift ohne Titel aus Codex II von Nag Hammadi*, 38/39, cf. also 42/43, 48/49 (Berlin 1962, *Deutsche Akad. d. Wiss. zu Berlin, Institut für Orientforschung* 58).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, I, 14 (Cairo 1351–58).

knowledge, or knowledge and learning being a lamp in the darkness of ignorance and sin came to be used as commonplace metaphors.<sup>7</sup>

According to the Qur'ân, light provides guidance and is given by God, and by God alone (24:40/40, 57:28/28). Knowledge, guidance, and a book giving light are the things that together provide for true religious insight (31:20/19). And a light accompanies the faithful, representing their perfect faith (66:8/8). Faith thus is a light in the heart, and a later mystic writer could very well describe the gnosis of God as a fire, and faith as a light.<sup>8</sup> In a famous verse of the Qur'ân (24:35/35), it is said that "God guides to His/his light (*nûrihî*) whomever He wishes." The explanation of the pronominal suffix in *nûrihî*, as referring either to God or to the believer, has caused much ink to flow on the part of Qur'ân commentators, and it also called forth explanatory glosses supposedly belonging to the Qur'ânic text itself.<sup>9</sup> There were authoritative commentators who paraphrased the crucial word to mean, "...the light of the believer in whose heart are faith and the Qur'ân."<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, the same verse speaks expressly of God as the light of the heavens and the earth. The alleged heretical imitation of the Qur'ân by Ibn al-Muqaffa' in the eighth century is supposed to have begun with the words, "In the name of the Light, the Merciful, the Compassionate," and to have continued with remarks in praise of light, presumably, under Manichaean, or, perhaps, also Zoroastrian, influence.<sup>11</sup> Shi'ah extremism as represented, we are told, by Hishâmi b. al-Ḥakam and Hishâm b. Sâlim al-Jawâlîqî would quite literally describe God as "a bright light of sparkling whiteness."<sup>12</sup> God's knowledge of what is underneath the earth is produced, it is said, by a continuous ray of light penetrating into the depth of the earth. Without such contact by means of radiation, God would not know what was there.<sup>13</sup> According to al-Malaṭî's report, the Qarmatians held the belief that "God was a Light

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi'*, I, 49–61; al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ'*, I, 43, 54, trans. Faris, 126, 129; *idem*, *Mizân al-'amal*, 343.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma'*, 63.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. A. Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ân*, 65, 149 (Leiden 1937).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. at-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XVIII, 95; Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî, *Tafsîr*, XXIII, 235.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. M. Guidi, *La lotta tra l'Islam e il Manicheismo*, intro., XVII, text, 8, trans. 14 (Rome 1927).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 32, 43, 207, 209.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 33, 221, 491.

Supernal (*'ulwī*), quite unlike the (other material) lights and not mixed with any darkness. From the Light Supernal, there was born the Light Diffused (*sha'sha'ânī*), from which came the prophets and imâms... From the Light Diffused, there was born a Light Darkly (*zâlâmī*), which is the light one sees in the sun, the moon, the stars, the fire, and the substances intermingled with darkness."<sup>14</sup> For the early Shī'ah sect of the Jârûdiyah, God was a light, and the spirits of the imâms and the prophets were born from it.<sup>15</sup> The divine light, manifesting itself in successive incarnations or emanations, "the light of the imâmate,"<sup>16</sup> is central to Shī'ah doctrine. According to Druze theology, the light of the Creator, the Light Diffused, brings forth the Universal Intellect, which is foremost in knowledge and in the recognition (*ma'rifah*) of our Lord. "Light" was a sort of *leitmotif* in the description of the entire cosmological system.<sup>17</sup> "The light of the heavens and the earth" of the Qur'ânic verse was understood by some Ismâ'îlis to be the Universal Intellect.<sup>18</sup>

Needless to say, all this was quite unacceptable to the Muslim majority. Since light is nothing but the mode of seeing, it is inapplicable to God.<sup>19</sup> With regard to the interpretation of the "light verse" of the Qur'ân, there was general agreement that "light" there had to be interpreted metaphorically according to one of a number of possibilities. Thus, it meant guide, administrator, giver

<sup>14</sup> Cf. al-Malaṭī, *Tanbīh*, 15. The captivity of light particles in matter and their struggle for liberation is the main theme of Manichaeism.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. al-Malaṭī, *Tanbīh*, 18. *Rūh* "spirit" was described by Ṣūfis also as a light derived from the divine light and even taken to be the essential light of divinity, cf. as-Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 554. The Qur'ânic *rūh* was, however, also explained as *'ilm* "knowledge," cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Mizân al-'amal*, 333; Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, III, 356, chapter 368.

<sup>16</sup> Thus, for instance, 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walīd, in Strothmann, *Gnosis-Texte der Ismailiten*, 149 f., 166, 168.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. C. Seybold, *Die Drusenschrift: Kitāb Alnoqat Waldawāir* (Kirchhain 1902). A particularly neat description of the successive generation of the five *ḥudūd*, beginning with the Universal Intellect, from the divine Light Diffused and then from the light of each further emanation appears at the beginning of the *Risālah al-mawṣūmah bi-sabab al-asbāb*, Ms. Yale S-45 Catalogue Nemoy 1068), fol. 98b.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Strothmann, *Gnosis-Texte der Ismailiten*, 24, Ar. text, 37, in a work dating from the nineteenth century.

For the designation of Muḥammad and 'Alī as the two lights in an apocryphal *ṣīrah*, cf. Nöldeke, Schwally, and others, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, II, 100 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, II, 23.

of light (“lamp” *diyâ*), adorer, owner of light, giver of existence, or the means for the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth of perceiving or of being perceived.<sup>20</sup>

Moderate Şûfis, too, understood God’s “light” in a metaphorical sense as being something immaterial, as being something serving the purpose of guiding mankind.<sup>21</sup> As is only natural, there were others who found deep significance in a literal understanding of the word “light.” Abû l-Manşûr al-Hallâj interpreted the Qur’anic phrase as “enlightener (*munawwir*) of the hearts,” but he also spoke of God in this connection as “the light of light, who guides whomever He wishes by His light to His power” and, in gradual steps, eventually to His uniqueness (*waḥdânîyah*). Al-Hallâj further declared that “in the head, there is the light of revelation; in the forehead (between the eyes), the light of discourse with the divine (*munâjâh*); in the ear, the light of certainty (*yaqîn*); in the tongue, the light of clarity; in the breast, the light of faith, etc.,” all of them lights which may, or may not, influence each other.<sup>22</sup> It is, however, somewhat strange to find al-Ghazzâlî strongly in favor of a literal understanding in the famous treatise entitled *Mishkât al-anwâr* which is devoted to commenting on the Qur’anic verse. God alone is “light” in reality. There is no other true light. All other uses of the term “light” must be understood as metaphors. For the deficient sight of the human eye, the sun and the other heavenly bodies constitute the light of external vision, while the Qur’ân and other divine books serve as instruments for internal vision and thus come closest to the proper meaning of light. Light

<sup>20</sup> The first three interpretations are found already in aṭ-Tabarî, *Tafsîr*, XVIII, 94. For the others, cf. al-Bayḍawî, *Anwâr at-tanzîl*, II, 23. According to the Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd*, 155, 158, *nûr* is to be understood as “guide.” Az-Zamakhsharî, *Kashshâf*, II, 312, considers *nûr* to mean “the owner of light,” and he interprets the light of the heavens and the earth as a metaphor for “the truth.” Even the Shî’ah commentator of the Qur’ân, aṭ-Tabarsî, *Majma‘ al-bayân*, VII, 142, admits only of the metaphorical interpretation of “light” as either *hâdî* “guide,” or *munawwir* “enlightener,” or *muzayyin* “adorn.” Diyâ’-ad-dîn Ismâ‘îl b. Hibatallâh (cf. Strothmann, *Ismailitischer Kommentar*, 268 f.) likewise explains “light” metaphorically as the *rûḥ* of the *mustaqarrs* and *mustawda’s*, which may, however, be not much more than a tautology, since *rûḥ* and *nûr* were occasionally considered to be identical.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma’*, 548.

<sup>22</sup> From as-Sulamî, *Ḥaqâ’iq at-tafsîr*, to Qur’ân 24:35/35, cf. Massignon, *Lexique technique*, 385 f.; A. Schimmel, *al-Halladsch*, 90 (Cologne 1968). The commentary of as-Sulamî (cf. below, p. 169, n. 4) can be assumed to contain further material of interest on this point.

is the metaphorical expression used to indicate (sense) perception and intellectual insight. Its real source in all cases is the Deity who is light *per se* and as such requires no external source of light but emanates light upon everything else in the appropriate quantity.<sup>23</sup> It is not surprising that later in the twelfth century, Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî felt strongly compelled to argue against such views. He went into great detail not only in his refutation of the literal interpretation which the anthropomorphists (*mujassimah*) gave to the word “light,” but he also demolished the attempts to equate “light” with the Deity according to the Manichaean doctrine that considered God as the “greatest light.”<sup>24</sup> Probably, Fakhr-ad-dîn was less concerned with the Manichaeans than with the great authority of a Ghazzâlî and, perhaps, with the religious views of various Shî‘ah groups. It must also not be forgotten that it was a contemporary of Fakhr-ad-dîn, who was but a few years younger, as-Suhrawardî *al-maqtûl*, who built up the concept of “light” into the guiding principle of the universe, for whom everything alive was pure light,<sup>25</sup> for whom God was “the Light of lights” and, following Plotinus, the pure light in the world of the intellect, the ultimate perfection,<sup>26</sup> and who constructed a coherent cosmology on the basis of the light manifestations of the first creative light (*an-nûr al-ibdâ‘î al-awwal*).<sup>27</sup> As-Suhrawardî himself found it opportune to distinguish between an alleged light-and-darkness doctrine of the ancient Persians, on which he pretended to have modeled his own, and the unbelief of the “Magians” and the Manichaean heresy.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mishkât al-anwâr*, trans. W. H. T. Gairdner (London 1924). For the problems of dating and the doubtful genuineness of the work, cf. Bouyges and Allard, *Essai de chronologie*, 65 f., but see also H. Lazarus Yafeh, in *Studia Islamica*, XXV (1966), 113.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî, *Tafsîr*, XXIII, 223 ff. Ar-Râzî’s commentary on this verse is the most detailed of all the commentaries mentioned here. It includes a long discussion of the *Mishkât al-anwâr*.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. as-Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-ishrâq*, I, 117, l. 8.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. as-Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-ishrâq*, I, 162, l. 6, and Plotinus, *Enneads*, IV, 8, cf. the translation of the *Theology of Aristotle* by G. Lewis in the Plotinus edition of P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer, II, 225–27 (Paris and Brussels, 1951–), and the German translation by F. Rosenthal, *Das Fortleben der Antike im Islam*, 212 f. (Zürich-Stuttgart 1965).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. as-Suhrawardî, *Hayâkil an-nûr*, ed. M. Abû Rayyân, 63 (Cairo 1957).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. as-Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-ishrâq*, I, 10 f. For the ancient Oriental inspiration of as-Suhrawardî’s “light” cosmology, cf. the introduction of H. Corbin to his edition, I, 39 ff. On his “light” theory, cf. also S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 69 f. (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), and the same, in M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, I, 387 ff. (Wiesbaden 1963).



The identification of light with knowledge, or with wisdom, or with both knowledge and wisdom, was ancient and accepted in Islam at an early stage, as attested by Mâlik's statement using the expression "light of wisdom (or knowledge)."<sup>29</sup> Mâlik's Christian contemporary, John of Damascus, who had Biblical verses such as Eccles. 2:13 to guide him, had likewise said: "Nothing is more estimable than knowledge, for knowledge is the light of the rational soul. The opposite, which is ignorance, is darkness. Just as the absence of light is darkness, so is the absence of knowledge a darkness of reason."<sup>30</sup> The Damascene's words were soon echoed by Job of Edessa in his Syriac encyclopaedia: "If a wise man is likened to light, and an ignorant man to darkness, ... it follows that knowledge of the created beings is light, and ignorance (of them) is darkness."<sup>31</sup>

Şûfism made use of the material provided by religious scholars that described knowledge as light.<sup>32</sup> Going far beyond it, Şûfî thinking was pervaded by the symbolism of light in its manifold manifestations. An apocryphal prayer has the Prophet exclaim: "God! Place above me a light and underneath me a light, before me a light and behind me a light. God! Place in my heart a light, in my eye a light, and in my ear a light, in my flesh a light and in my bone a light."<sup>33</sup> All true spiritual insight is characterized here as light, a light that is inescapable for the devoted seeker after knowledge. Numerous were the Şûfîs who were ready to "see by the light of God"<sup>34</sup> and to describe the achievement of any given

<sup>29</sup> Cf. above, p. 71.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. John of Damascus, *Pégg gnôseôs*, 529, trans. Chase, 7. For Philo's equation of "light" and "knowledge" (*epistêmê*), cf. Klein, *Lichtterminologie*, 16, 42, n. 2. A saying ascribed to Aristotle (Diogenes Laertius, V, 17) or to Zeno (*Gnomologium Vaticanum*, ed. L. Sternbach, no. 297 [reprint Berlin 1963]) states that vision takes light from the air, and the soul from the *mathêmata*, which, however, seems to mean not knowledge in general but mathematics as the most basic and enlightening of subject matters.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Job of Edessa, *Book of Treasures*, text, 297b, trans., 2. Cf. also above, p. 91, and, for instance, Ibn 'Arabî, *Futûhât*, III, 100, 276.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, *Qût*, I, 197, l. 7, citing the saying mentioned above, p. 71 (also above, n. 1), as a remark by a jurist.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma'*, 515. A variation of the statement forms part of the prayer recommended for use upon leaving one's house to go to the mosque, cf. Tâshköprüzâdeh, *Miftâh as-sa'âdah*, III, 105. As-Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-ishrâq*, I, 164, also contains a prayer of the Prophet to the "Light of lights." Cf. also Abû Nu'aym, *Hilyah*, III, 210.

<sup>34</sup> Cf., for instance, al-Hakîm at-Tirmidhî, *aş-Şalâh wa-maqâşiduhâ*, ed. 'Abd-al-Halîm Maḥmûd and H. N. Zaydân, 39 (Cairo 1965); al-Kalâbâdhî, *Ta'arruf*, trans. Arberry, 8,

mystic state as owing to illumination, to various lights (in the plural) entering their hearts. In mystic ecstasy, an Abû Yazîd al-Bisṭāmî might address God as his knowledge in his ignorance and claim to be God's light on earth.<sup>35</sup> He might go even farther and declare the light of God to be good only for knowing (ʿ*r-f*) what is beneath God, whereas he on his part knew (ʿ*r-f*) God Himself through God.<sup>36</sup> As-Sarrāj polemicized against this attitude, not because he considered the concept of the light of mysticism as erroneous, but because he felt that there was a tendency to consider this light as divine and uncreated. "Some Ṣūfis think that they see lights, and they describe their hearts as containing light, in the assumption that it is one of the lights which God has mentioned Himself among His attributes. Moreover, they describe this light as comparable to the light of the sun and the moon, and they believe that it belongs to the lights of gnosis (*maʿrifah*), the recognition of oneness (*tawḥîd*), and majesty, believing further that these lights are uncreated." For as-Sarrāj, the true meaning of "lights of the hearts" was the cognition (*maʿrifah*) of the *furqân* and clear insight (*bayân*) from God, as the word *furqân* in Qurʾân 8:29/29 was explained by the commentators as "a light placed in the heart, so as to decide between truth and untruth."<sup>37</sup> Already al-Muḥāsibî had proclaimed that "the light of knowledge" could enlighten only the pious (*ahl at-tuqâ*), just as the light of day was useful only for those able to see, and not for the blind.<sup>38</sup> And behavior unbecoming for a Ṣūfi like spending his time in the bazaar could be castigated as "gouging the eye of excellence and obliterating the light of knowledge."<sup>39</sup>

Whatever its specific interpretation in a given case, "light" remained a current, constantly used, and somewhat trite term in

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156; as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 156, l. 9; al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 105, l. 30, 106, l. 14, 110, l. 6; M. Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, 61 (London 1935); Abû Nuʿaym, *Hilyah*, IX, 262. The phrase "seeing by the light of Our Lord" is employed as a formula in the beginning of the Druze treatises, *Nuskhat sijill al-Muḥtabâ* and *Taqlîd ar-Ridâ*, Yale Mss. A-64, fols. 51b, 53b, and L-733, fols. 60a, 63a.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. as-Sahlaǧî, *Nûr*, 139.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. as-Sahlaǧî, *Nûr*, 129, 133.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. as-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ*, 548.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. al-Muḥāsibî, *Risâlat al-mustarshidîn*, ed. Abû l-Fattâh Abû Ghuddah, 84 (Aleppo 1384/1964).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Fuwaṭî, *Talkhîṣ Majmaʿ al-âdâb*, ed. Muṣṭafâ Jawâd, IV, 4, 638 (Damascus 1962-67).

the Şûfî vocabulary. To quote once more remarks ascribed to Abû Yazîd al-Bisṭāmî, it is the light of the divine essence (*nûr adh-dhât*) that is needed to bring forth the knowledge of eternity (*ʿilm al-azal*). And it is said that each one of the numerous “stations” on the mystic path has a light of its own, and the mystic’s banner (*liwâʿ*) itself consists of light.<sup>40</sup> Şûfis were only too willing to describe every desirable phenomenon as “light.” We thus find references to the light of obedience to God (*tâʿah*), the light of wisdom, which is a commonly employed phrase, the light of understanding (*fahm*), of *tawḥîd*, of the realities of faith, of sincere devotion (*ikhlas*) and truthfulness (*sidq*), of God’s holiness and mercy, and so on.<sup>41</sup> For al-Ḥakîm at-Tirmidhî, every word directed toward the Deity has a light. The lights of intellect, nearness to God, majesty or God’s face are, understandably, different in intensity. There is a light of *tawḥîd*, a light of *îmân*, and so forth.<sup>42</sup> By “the light” of insight, knowledge is meant.<sup>43</sup> “The lights of knowledge shine for the gnostic (*ʿarif*), so that he is enabled to see the miracles of the supernatural.”<sup>44</sup> Playfully, an unnamed scholar used to tell the inner circle of his followers when he was alone with them and wanted to discuss “the science of the duties of the heart,” to bring in “the inner light” (*an-nûr al-bâṭin*).<sup>45</sup> Later, in the knowledge-centered mysticism of the school of Ibn ʿArabî, it was only natural to speak, as did Ṣadr-ad-dîn al-Qônawî, of knowledge (that is, the true knowledge of the mystic and of God) as “light,” as “the essence (*ʿayn*) of light,” as “pure light,” as “the light of divine being,” as “the uncovering light.” Outward knowledge constituted “the form of light,” while inner knowledge constituted “the idea of light.”<sup>46</sup>

The “light” (or “lights”) of knowledge was, however, a phrase employed in Şûfism to a lesser degree than “the light of certainty” (“certain knowledge,” *yaqîn*). It is certainty that is described as

<sup>40</sup> Cf. as-Sahlaǧî, *Nûr*, 81, 63, 111.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. as-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqât*, 81, ll. 4 f., 149, l. 4, 311, ll. 4 f., 324, l. 2, 415, l. 6, 344, ll. 2 f., but all these were widely used expressions.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. al-Ḥakîm at-Tirmidhî, *Ṣalâh*, 13, 44, 65, 67, and his *Khatm al-awliyâʿ*, 121, n. 18.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. al-Muḥâsibî, *Riʿyah*, 38, l. 11. For knowledge as a lamp, cf. *Riʿyah*, 46, l. 3.”

<sup>44</sup> Abû ʿUthmân al-Maghribî, as quoted by al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 143, l. 9.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Baḥyâ b. Pâqûdâ, *Hidâyah*, ed. A. S. Yahuda, 14 (Leiden 1912).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. al-Qônawî, *Ijâz al-bayân*, 49 f., 52 f., 333.

a light in the heart, the true source of illuminative faith and piety.<sup>47</sup> Nor is another concept, “the light of gnosis” (*maʿrifah*), absent from mystic terminology. Dhû n-Nûn al-Miṣrî is said to have remarked that “the gnostic must not let the light of his gnosis extinguish the light of his asceticism, nor must he believe in any esoteric knowledge that destroys the exoteric law.”<sup>48</sup> In this case, the parallelism employed equates the light of gnosis with esoteric knowledge, even if the latter is not spoken of expressly as a light. This, however, was done by al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhî in his treatise on the meaning of knowledge (*Kitâb Bayân al-ʿilm*), in which he polemicized against those who accused the Ṣûfis of working toward the abolition of “knowledge” in the sense of legal, traditionist knowledge. Certain people discuss religious matters only in order to gain prestige among their associates. They are certain to lose the spiritual benefits that must otherwise come to them as the result of their quest. The Ṣûfis are opposed to those people. Everything the Ṣûfis undertake to learn is approached in the understanding that it will provide them with insight and certainty. “For knowledge is a light. The more a person acquires of the fear of God, the greater is the amount of light he obtains. The more the heart is cleansed of any harmful matter, the more luminous (*anwar*) and the more abundant is the knowledge going to be.”<sup>49</sup> Light, knowledge, purity of heart, and the fear of God are all mixed together here, without any tangible rational distinction. It is certainly true that from its early beginnings through its entire existence, Ṣûfî speculation has always thrived on the arbitrary mingling or contracting of meaningful concepts. Light and knowledge, in particular, belonged together as a kind of conceptual foundation for mysticism, with the one being expressive of its essential emotional, inspirational, “illuminative” aspect, and the other, of its systematic, theoretical-scientific side that became an inseparable part of mysticism in Islam.

As we have just seen, with respect to its view of “knowledge,” early Ṣûfism was bothered by the specific connotation which *ʿilm* had acquired, referring to religious knowledge in the legal-traditionalist

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, *Qût*, I, 85, 176; al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 143, l. 9.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Lumaʿ*, 551; al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 143, ll. 11 f. For *nûr al-maʿrifah*, cf. also al-Kharrâz, *Rasâʾil*, ed. Qâsim as-Sâmarrâʾi, 37, 43, 47 (Baghdâd 1387/1967); as-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqât*, 268, l. 6, 508, l. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhî, in the Ankara Ms. Ismail Saib, I, 1571, fol. 15a.

sense. Ṣūfism as a whole was not hostile to this kind of knowledge, and wherever Ṣūfism touched the Muslim masses, as it practically always did, could not afford to be. In the totality of the history of mysticism in Islam, the Ṣūfis who deprecated traditionist *ʿilm* and who were ready to do away with it constituted a small minority, which, by this very fact, found considerable and well deserved attention for expressing unusual and non-conformist minority opinions. However, Ṣūfism attempted to add something of its own, some new twist as it were, to the generally accepted concept of *ʿilm*. It was therefore unable and unwilling to identify itself with it without reservation. It is not by chance that Ṣūfi authors stressed the traditions in which knowledge was defined in terms of light, or piety, or god-fearing activity, preceded by the statement that knowledge did not consist merely of a large amount of transmitted traditional material.<sup>50</sup> Yet, the very rivalry that existed between mysticism and traditionist *ʿilm* caused the theoreticians of Ṣūfism to insist on labeling their own endeavors as *ʿilm*. With the growing prestige that rapidly accrued to the concept of knowledge in Islam, the Ṣūfis showed themselves all the more anxious to make room for *ʿilm* in their own thinking. It is true, however, that the preemption by others of *ʿilm* as a technical term prevented the Ṣūfis permanently from selecting *ʿilm* for employment as one of the numerous technical terms of their own mystic vocabulary and from using it to designate by it one of their specific states or stations. Since *maʿrifah* and *yaqīn* lent themselves without much difficulty to doubling for *ʿilm*, they were indeed widely substituted for it.

*Maʿrifah*, as a technical term referring to knowledge about God, was in all likelihood shared originally by Ṣūfis with other early Muslim religious thinkers who found the essential basis of faith in the knowledge about God in the first place and, thereafter, in

<sup>50</sup> Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt*, I, 197 (above, p. 161, n. 4), quotes two such remarks, one of them equating knowledge with the fear of God (*khashyah*), and the other equating it with light. For the equation with *khashyah*, see above, p. 140, n. 1, and below, p. 174; cf. also Ibn Rajab, *Faḍl ʿilm as-salaf*, 36 ff. The continuation in al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 24, ll. 7 f., attributed to Ibrāhīm al-Khawwās to the effect that "...the knower is rather he who follows up on his knowledge and employs it and follows the example of the *ṣuman*, even if he possesses little knowledge," expresses a thought which has nothing specifically mystic to it. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb Iqtidāʾ al-ʿilm al-ʿamal*, in al-Albānī, *Min kunūz as-sunnah*, 169, quotes this statement from al-Qushayrī as indicative of the need for action.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. above, pp. 99 ff.

the knowledge about a varying number of religious beliefs.<sup>51</sup> As-Sarrâj thus states that the basic principles of religion include, in this order, the recognition of God's oneness, knowledge (*ma'rifah*), faith, certainty (*yaqîn*), and so on. *Ma'rifah* is used here in a way which would not have raised an orthodox, non-mystic eyebrow.<sup>52</sup> A better argument in favor of the assumption that the *ma'rifah* of the early theologians and the original understanding of the term by the Şûfis were not far apart is obviously the time element. Both theology and mysticism came into being at the same time and, presumably, among the same kind of men, since, as far as we know, the dividing line between theologians and mystics was all but non-existent in the early Muslim community. It has already been shown that there was no real difference between *ma'rifah* and *ilm* at the earliest stages of Muslim metaphysical thought,<sup>53</sup> and the same would seem to be valid for mysticism. Much later, such an influential figure in the history of Şûfî theory as al-Qushayrî returned to the beginnings by stating plainly that in scholarly usage, every *ilm* was a *ma'rifah*, and every *ma'rifah* an *ilm*, that every knower of God was a gnostic (*ârif*), and every gnostic, a knower or scholar (*âlim*), and that the special use of *ma'rifah* as referring to certain metaphysical and ethical insights and practices was due to Şûfî theorizing.<sup>54</sup> Still later, the school of Ibn 'Arabî produced mystic thinkers such as Şadr-ad-dîn al-Qônawî who, in a work of his entitled *an-Nafahât al-ilâhiyah*, put the problems of *ilm* squarely in the center of things. In his work, *ma'rifah* is almost entirely replaced by *ilm* and plays only a very minor role. For al-Qônawî, it is *ilm*, and not *ma'rifah*, that is the true goal of the mystic. It is not generally agreed upon by mystics what true knowledge is, but in his ecstasy, al-Qônawî sees himself as "the mirror of the true essence of knowledge": "I saw my guesswork to be knowledge; my knowledge, existence; my existence, non-existence; and my non-existence, I saw to be in control of all existence."<sup>55</sup>

In keeping with the general semantic development of the two roots, *ilm* remained the wider term also in Şûfism, covering in a

<sup>52</sup> Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma'*, 433. See above, p. 102, n. 4.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. above, p. 134.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 141, ll. 5 ff.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. al-Qônawî, *Nafahât*, fols. 12a, 13b-14a.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Massignon, *Lexique technique*, 284, citing ash-Sha'rânî's *Ṭabaqât*.

sense the entire, spectrum of mystic thought as part of the totality of intellectual life. *Ma'rifah* was often no more than a particular state or station. However, at its best, it also was a term expressive of the distinctive essence of mysticism. It was therefore possible for mystics to place the higher value either upon *ilm* or upon *ma'rifah*, depending upon the individual author's particular outlook, even if, it would seem, *ma'rifah* had a slight edge in many places. Abû Yazîd al-Bisṭāmî supposedly placed *ilm* above *ma'rifah*,<sup>56</sup> whereas al-Ḥallāj took the opposite stand,<sup>57</sup> with such later authors as as-Suhrawardî *al-maqtûl*<sup>58</sup> and Ibn 'Arabî<sup>59</sup> vacillating and occasionally coming out in favor of *ma'rifah* but mostly, it seems, leaning toward *ilm*. Abû Sa'îd al-Kharrâz, who was convinced that in the state of closeness to True Reality, the Ṣūfî did not feel any physical or intellectual emotion, including that of knowledge, also claimed that the knowledge (*ilm*) of God was something wider and deeper than the gnosis (or knowledge about, *ma'rifah*) of God, although both were infinite. The knowledge of God leads to the cognition of gnosis (*ma'rifat al-ma'rifah*) at the time of the passing of the (mere) knowledge of gnosis (*ilm al-ma'rifah*) and interpretation and the passing of comment and being cut off from union.<sup>60</sup> Poverty (*faqr*)—by the time of Ibn Sab'în (d. 669/1271), who relates these statements, a synonym of Ṣūfism—may be achieved by putting the religious law (*shar'*) to the right, the intellect to the left, and knowledge (*ilm*) in the middle, but it may also be defined as the first perfection together with knowledge (*ilm*) and the second perfection together with gnosis (*ma'rifah*), being, in fact, the sum of both, together with pure humanity.<sup>61</sup> Both knowledge and gnosis are viewed here as indispensable for the mystic, although gnosis represents a posterior, higher stage. Thus, *ma'rifah* and the *ʿarîf* were the specific goal of mystic endeavor and soared above the thoughts and opinions to which *ilm* and

<sup>57</sup> Cf. L. Massignon, *La Passion d'al Ḥusayn-Ibn-Manṣûr al-Ḥallāj*, 776 f., 624 (Paris 1922).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. as-Suhrawardî, *Risâlat Ṣaḡîr Sîmurgh*, ed. O. Spies, *Three Treatises on Mysticism*, 19, trans., 32 (Stuttgart 1935, *Bonner Orientalistische Studien* 12).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Ibn 'Arabî, *Futûḥât*, IV, 55, with reference to his *Mawâqî' an-nujûm*, which is preserved in many important manuscripts, cf. Osman Yahia, *Histoire et classification de l'œuvre d'Ibn 'Arabî*, 375–77, no. 443 (Damascus 1964). But cf. above, p. 116, and below, p. 190.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. al-Kharrâz, *Rasâ'il*, 26.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Ibn Sab'în, *Rasâ'il*, ed. 'Abd-ar-Raḥmân Badawî, 13 (Cairo 1965).



the *ʿālim* aspired but failed to live up. Knowledge is available to all believers but gnosis (*maʿrifah*) only to saints, and Sahl at-Tustarī claims that “knowledge is established by gnosis..., while gnosis is established by its own essence.”<sup>62</sup> For Ibn Yazdānyār, “*maʿrifah* is the soundness of the knowledge of God,”<sup>63</sup> and Abū l-Abbās as-Sayyārī, playing on words, describes true gnosis (*maʿrifah*) as giving up individual knowledge (*maʿārif*).<sup>64</sup> In the view of Ḥaṭīm al-Aṣamm, *maʿrifah* is the final fulfillment of all Ṣūfī virtues.<sup>65</sup> “The gnostic (*ʿārif*) is above what he says, while the knower (*ʿālim*) is beneath it.”<sup>66</sup>

The relationship of *ʿilm* and *yaqīn* in Ṣūfism is different from that between *ʿilm* and *maʿrifah* in that *maʿrifah* became a special mystic form of *ʿilm*, whereas *yaqīn* took the place of *ʿilm* wherever *ʿilm* appeared to have become debased through its usurpation by legal-traditionalist theologians and thus unsuitable for expressing a knowledge based on feeling and emotion.<sup>67</sup> *Yaqīn* “certainty” was offered by the Qurʾān as a synonym for truth and essential insight but above all as a synonym for knowledge.<sup>68</sup> It was, however, generally if not always,<sup>69</sup> a higher form of knowledge, purified of the element of error and fallibility inherent in ordinary knowledge. This remained the Ṣūfī understanding of the term. While the opposite of *ʿilm* “knowledge” was *jahl* “ignorance,” the opposite

<sup>62</sup> Quoted by al-Kalābādhi, *Taʿarruf*, trans. Arberry, 50 f.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilyah*, X, 363; as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 409, l. 3.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 444, l. 12.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 94, ll. 4 f. For Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz’ distinction between *ʿilm* and *maʿrifah*, cf. as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 230.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 142, l. 30; as-Sahlaḥī, *Nūr*, 130, attributing the statement to Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī.

<sup>67</sup> Abū Madyan remarked that the study of mysticism required four qualities, asceticism, knowledge (*ʿilm*), trust in God, and certainty (*yaqīn*). For his seventeenth-century commentator, Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm b. ʿAllān aṣ-Ṣiddīqī, it was self-evident that *ʿilm* referred to the punctilious fulfillment of the external duties of the religious law, while *yaqīn* referred to the mystic’s knowledge gained through “state” and “taste” that everything in the world was created by God to serve Him, cf. *Sharḥ Hikam Abī Madyan*, in the Istanbul Ms. M. Arif-M. Murad 34 *mükerrer* (preserved in the Süleymaniye Library), fol. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. above, pp. 23 ff. For a modern view of the difference between knowledge and certainty, cf. H. G. van Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty in English Thought 1630–1690* (The Hague 1963).

<sup>69</sup> Thus, al-Bāḥī, *Hudūd*, 6, contends that *ʿilm* includes being certain (*taḥaqqun*), but it is possible also to be certain without knowledge, and this then is believing (*iʿtiqād*).



of *yaqîn* “certainty” was *shakk* “doubt.”<sup>70</sup> The common combination was “doubt and certainty.” The combination “doubt and knowledge” was rarely used. While knowledge is the firm belief that a thing is as it is, certainty is one’s satisfaction with and assuredness of what one knows. This, incidentally, means that in contrast to knowledge, *yaqîn* cannot be an attribute of God,<sup>71</sup> a fact that perhaps contributed to the suitability of *yaqîn*, in preference to knowledge, as a term designating a mystic state. Certainty is the knowledge whose owner is not beset by any doubt (*rayb*) whatever.<sup>72</sup> It is a knowledge which does not fall prey (? , *taftarisuh*) to doubts.<sup>73</sup> According to Abû ‘Abdallâh (Abû ‘Alî) al-Anṭâkî, “certainty is a light God places into the heart of man,” so that he may be able to learn about the other world.<sup>74</sup> The least bit of certainty, upon entering the heart, fills it with light and drives out the slightest doubt (*rayb*).<sup>75</sup> This admits of being reversed: “A little certainty removes all the doubt from the heart, and a little doubt removes all the certainty from the heart,”<sup>76</sup> Knowledge apart from the quality of certainty is doubtful knowledge. Conjoined to certainty, it is knowledge without any doubt whatever.<sup>77</sup> The distinction between plain knowledge on the one hand, and certainty as knowledge without doubt, on the other, is interpreted to be one between acquired knowledge and intuitive knowledge. Certainty is knowledge deposited in the hearts, meaning that it is a knowledge that is not acquired.<sup>78</sup> Or it may be said that knowledge exchanges

<sup>70</sup> Cf., for instance, *Lisân al-‘Arab*, XVII, 349; al-Ḥakîm at-Tirmidhî, *al-‘Aql wa-l-hawâ*, 122. On doubt, cf., further, below, pp. 299 ff.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. al-‘Askarî, *Furûq*, 63. Among the definitions of knowledge, we find also the distinction between knowledge and certainty, cf. F-5, above, p. 64, also p. 63, n. 7.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 44, l. 5.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. as-Sulamî’s commentary, *Ḥaqâ’iq at-tafsîr*, on Qur’ân, *sûrah* 102. The commentary on this *sûrah* consists almost entirely of Ṣûfî sayings dealing with *‘ilm al-yaqîn* and *‘ayn al-yaqîn*. I used a manuscript in the General Library in Rabat, no. 6y (Ibn Yûsuf collection), pp. 349 f., which, to judge from the excerpts in Massignon, *Lexique technique*, 110, does not contain the complete text.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 139. Al-Anṭâkî died ca. 239/853–54. According to *GAZ*, *Suppl.*, I, 351, following Massignon, he died in 220/835. Sezgin, I, 638, has Abû ‘Ubaydallâh. Cf. definition L-3, above, p. 68.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 83, ll. 7 f.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Ibn Kathîr, *Bidâyah*, X, 318 f.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. as-Sulamî. *Ḥaqâ’iq at-tafsîr*. Read: *bi-lâ shubhah*.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 83, l. 13. Cf. also Dhû n-Nûn al-Miṣrî, in al-Kalâbâdhî, *Ta’arruf*, trans. Arberry, 94.

places with doubts. There may be knowledge where before, there was doubt, and there may be doubt where before, there was knowledge. But there is no doubt whatever in certainty. Consequently, knowledge is something acquired, and so is the knowledge of Ṣūfis at the beginning of their mystic journey, while certainty is intuitive and comes to the Ṣūfis at the end of their quest.<sup>79</sup> Whether there could be different degrees of certainty as there were of knowledge, was a problem posed by Ibn ʿArabī on the basis of a tradition common among Ṣūfis which said that Jesus, if he were to gain an increase in certainty, could walk in the air, instead of merely upon water.<sup>80</sup> Ibn ʿArabī also argued for the non-identity of *ʿilm* and *yaqīn*. He explains the three stages of *yaqīn* presupposed in the Qurʾān (*ʿilm/ʿayn/ḥaqq al-yaqīn*) by a variation of the well-known geographical example for degrees of knowledge: The three stages are the undoubted knowledge, based upon hearsay, of the existence of the Kaʿbah, the visit to the Kaʿbah combined with the actual observation of it, and learning about the Kaʿbah’s real meaning.<sup>81</sup>

The relationship between *yaqīn* “certainty” and *īmān* “faith” seems to have appeared to Ṣūfī theoreticians in a somewhat ambiguous light. While patience (*ṣabr*) and gratefulness (*shukr*) constitute only one-half of faith, certainty is said to constitute the totality of faith.<sup>82</sup> “The science (*ʿilm*) of certainty” is the end and entelechy of “the science of faith.”<sup>83</sup> But faith is also considered as better than certainty.<sup>84</sup> From a listing of the mystic’s “stations” in an ascending order, the impression might be gained that certainty is considered higher than the very first station, which is *maʿrifah*, and again lower than *taṣdīq* (which is known to function as a synonym of faith), but then, it is stated that faith in reality com-

<sup>79</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 83, ll. 16 f.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, II, 204, chapter 122. See also Pseudo-Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq on *yaqīn* (above, pp. 91 f.).

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, II, 570 f., also, IV, 375.

On al-Ghazzālī’s understanding of *yaqīn*, see the monograph by Jabre, *Notion de certitude*, 131 f. and *passim*.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. al-Kharrāz, *Ṣidq*, 9; Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt*, III, 17, also, III, 17, where certainty is dubbed the reality of faith. It may be on this basis that *yaqīn* is translated “faith” and *ʿilm al-yaqīn* “the science of religion” in N. A. Faris’ translation of al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyāʾ* I, 69, l. 20, 70, l. 17, trans., 208, 211.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt*, I, 120.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. as-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ*, 446.

prises all of the “stations.”<sup>85</sup> While faith may have *taṣdīq* as its synonym, certainty is “pure faith.”<sup>86</sup> Certainty apparently goes together with both *maʿrifāh* and *īmān* in orthodox Ṣūfī thinking,<sup>87</sup> as does knowledge in the view of the theologians. This is another indication that “certainty” serves as a replacement for plain “knowledge” in Muslim mysticism. The superiority of certainty over knowledge in the Ṣūfī scheme of things found its clear expression in some such remarks as this one, credited to Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz: “Knowledge is what starts you upon action, and certainty is what carries you along.”<sup>88</sup> Or, as Abū Saʿīd’s younger contemporary, al-Junayd, put it: “Certainty is the firm establishment in the heart of a knowledge which does not undergo revision or transformation or change,”<sup>89</sup> while somewhat later, Abū Bakr al-Warrāq exclaimed that it was through certainty that God was known (ʿ-*r-f*).<sup>90</sup> A certain Ṣūfī, about whose identity the sources do not agree,<sup>91</sup> spent sixteen days sitting at the side of a pool in the country without eating or drinking. When asked what he was doing there, he replied: “I am between knowledge and certainty, waiting which of them will come out on top, so that I can be with it.” Al-Qushayrī’s explanation for the cryptic remark is that when knowledge wins out, he would drink, and if certainty wins out, he would go along (*marartu*), meaning, it seems, he would go on with his fast. Whether this explanation hits the mark or not, the Ṣūfī no doubt hoped for the victory of certainty. Certainty would lift him above the uncertainties of mere knowledge, even though it was the knowledge needed by him on the mystic path.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 83, l. 18. Al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī, *al-ʿAql wa-l hawāʾ*, also places *yaqīn* a step above *maʿrifāh*.

<sup>86</sup> According to al-Anṭākī, cited by Massignon, *Lexique technique*, 227.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. the chapter headings in Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt*, I, 195, III, 56.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 84, ll. 26 f.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 83, l. 32.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 84, l. 14.

<sup>91</sup> Both as-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ* 407, and following him, al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 83, ll. 9 ff., report the story in the name of Abū Jaʿfar al-Haddād, who belonged to the circle of al-Junayd and Ruwaym and thus lived around 900. However, the name of the interrogator is later on given as Abū Turāb an-Nakhshabī, who had died already in 245/859. *Tāʾrikh Baghdad*, XIV, 412, does not connect Abū Jaʿfar al-Haddād with Abū Turāb, although this may have been done by Ibn ʿAsākir, cf. the editor’s footnote in as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 234. Perhaps, the individual meant was not Abū Jaʿfar al-Haddād but Abū Ḥafṣ al-Haddād, who died around 270/883 (cf. as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 116; al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 17)?

*ʿilm* was thus forced to contend with *maʿrifah* and *yaqīn* in mysticism, but it remained a term of overpowering import for both Ṣūfī theory and Ṣūfī practice. The basic tenet of all Muslim ethics, the necessary combination of knowledge with action based on it,<sup>92</sup> was adopted as a matter of course by most Ṣūfis and extolled in a great variety of statements and discussions. Keeping company with men of learning was accepted as a fundamental condition for sound mystic training, and its desirability was constantly stressed. Biographical notices of Ṣūfis usually describe their subjects as “scholars” (*ʿālim*). At times, the particular field of learning in which a certain Ṣūfī excelled is mentioned. This may be theology or other non-mystic subjects, or it may be the science of the realities (*ʿilm al-ḥaqāʾiq*). In the latter case, the field of the Ṣūfī’s particular scholarly competence was understood to be mystic theory. A mystic described as *ʿālim*, with no further qualification, might thereby be intended to qualify as an *ʿarif*, a gnostic. Usually, however, it would seem that *ʿālim* in these cases was employed in the common meaning of being a learned, knowledgeable man. Like other Muslim intellectuals, the Ṣūfis, too, complained about abuses committed by the learned, such as their drive for prestige and money on the strength of the scholarly recognition that was accorded to them,<sup>93</sup> and they also succumbed to the illusion of assuming that those evil tendencies were the product of modern times and had been unknown in the good old days. Already Dhū

<sup>92</sup> See below, pp. 246 ff. *ʿilm* could be superseded by *ʿaql* in this respect by describing the essence of intelligence as “a light in the heart that guides the soul toward the principles of action,” cf. al-Kharrāz, *Rasāʾil*, 47.

<sup>93</sup> The term used is *al-mubāḥāh bi-l-ʿilm*. The censure of this kind of attitude is by no means restricted to Ṣūfism, cf., for instance, *Concordance*, IV, 328b54 f.; Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn al-akhbār*, II, 119 (reprint Cairo 1963–64); Ibn ʿAbd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 228; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Iqtidāʾ*, 193 ff. It was put into the mouth of Luqmān as the representative of pre-Islamic educational wisdom, cf. Ibn ʿAbd-al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ*, I, 107, and the anonymous version in al-Mubashshir, 333; also Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilyah*, VI, 62 f. For further use of the expression by Ṣūfī authors, cf., for instance, al-Muḥāsibī, *Riʾāyah*, 130 ff., also M. Smith, *An Early Mystic*, 142 (overweening pride in knowledge: *Riʾāyah*, 240 f.); ʿAbd-al-Muḥsin al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Maʿrifah ʿind al-Hakīm at-Tirmidhī*, 97 f. (Cairo, n. y. [1968 ?]); Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilyah*, VII, 10; as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 452, l. 6, = al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 28, l. 29.

The fear of *mubāḥāh* was the principal force in the Malāmīyah’s rejection of the occupation with *ʿilm*, cf. as-Sulamī, *Risālat al-Malāmīyah*, ed. Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Afīfī, *al-Malāmīyah*, 112 (Cairo 1364/1945), also, 116 and the editor’s discussion, 65–67.

Cf. also below, pp. 256 and 315.

n-Nûn al-Miṣrî is said to have complained: "There was a time when a man of knowledge (*min ahl al-ʿilm*) by virtue of his knowledge acquired an increased hatred for this world and became more ready to renounce it. Today, a man's knowledge instills in him an increased love for this world, and he becomes more ready to go after (material prosperity). There was a time when a man spent his property on the acquisition of knowledge. Today, he acquires property through his knowledge. There was a time when a man of knowledge (*ṣāhib al-ʿilm*) could be observed to grow, both inwardly and outwardly. Today, many men of knowledge can be observed to grow in corruption in both respects."<sup>94</sup> This reproach is certainly directed not only to the traditionists but also to many of the Ṣûfis of Dhû n-Nûn's time.

The concept of knowledge constituted a kind of background music to all Ṣûfî thinking. A dissonant note was introduced by occasional reflections on the inferiority of "knowledge" not only, as we have seen, to the concept of *maʿrifah* but also, generally, to emotion and feeling. Abû Yazîd al-Biṣṭāmî went through a long period of study under great scholars, in order to become both an *ʿālim* and an *ʿarif* (the *ʿarif* being here the higher stage). Then, he sought the company of devout men who punctiliously observed all the religious duties. But when God finally answered his question about true reality, the answer came not by means of the knowledge or the formal piety previously acquired but in a burst of emotion and inspiration.<sup>95</sup> "The novice must subject himself to the regimen of knowledge (*siyâsat al-ʿilm*), but the observance of the truth is something higher." These were the words by which al-Junayd proclaimed the primacy of feeling and intuition over learning.<sup>96</sup> Or, as he expressed the same idea on another occasion: "The right and true novice does not need the knowledge of scholars."<sup>97</sup>

Knowledge was also subordinated at times to certain other qualities. In the view of Abû l-Ḥusayn an-Nûrî, Ṣûfism is not definitions (*rusûm*) and kinds of knowledge (*ʿulûm*) but ethical qualities (*akhlâq*).<sup>98</sup> Others said that "a little right behavior

<sup>94</sup> Cf. as-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqât*, 25.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. as-Sahlaǧî, *Nûr*, 126 f.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 94, ll. 11 f. See also the dictum of Ibrâhîm b. al-Muwallad, cited by as-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqât*, 411, ll. 6 f.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 93, l. 34.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. as-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqât*, 167, ll. 5 f. For *rusûm*, see above, p. 49, n. 2.

(education, *adab*) is more needed by us than knowledge.”<sup>99</sup> Thus, “whenever Ibrâhîm b. Adham was asked about knowledge, he came up with *adab*.”<sup>100</sup> And knowledge may be said to be just one of four qualities needed by the mystic, in addition to right behavior (*adab*), integrity (*amânah*), and modesty (*iffah*).<sup>101</sup> For the Şûfis who were concerned with action more than with contemplation, ethics and morality were as important as thought.

However, it was knowledge that the angels themselves would feel called upon to discuss with the chosen mystic.<sup>102</sup> It was knowledge that was as rare as it was valuable in the world: “All of the world is ignorance, except that which is knowledge.”<sup>103</sup> It was knowledge that first awakened the Şûfi to his task of searching after God, even if it then left him confused and bewildered.<sup>104</sup> Knowledge also lent itself to evaluative comparisons with various technical concepts of the mystic vocabulary. The “mystic state” (*hâl*) “is inseparable from knowledge, as it is irreconcilable with talk,” according to Abû Ḥafş an-Nîsâbûrî.<sup>105</sup> “Fear” (*khawf*, *makhâfah*) is the product of knowledge, just as tranquillity is the result of asceticism, and repentance that of *maʿrifah*, says al-Muḥâsibî.<sup>106</sup> In the view of ʿAmr b. ʿUthmân al-Makkî (d. 291/903–4, or later in the same decade), knowledge and fear must combine as guide and driver in order to govern as well as frighten the unruly horse that is the human soul.<sup>107</sup> According to Abû ʿAbdallâh at-Turûghbadhî (first half of the tenth century), depending on the prevailing circumstances, knowledge might produce fear (*khawf*), apprehension

<sup>99</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 129, ll. 9 f., citing ʿAbdallâh b. al-Mubâarak (d. 181/797). Although Ibn al-Mubâarak cannot be considered a Şûfi, he was devoted to and interested in asceticism, on which he wrote several treatises. Cf. below, p. 316.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Abû Nuʿaym, *Hilyah*, VIII, 27.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. as-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqât*, 51, citing as-Sarî as-Saqâtî (d. 251/865–66, or 253).

<sup>102</sup> Abû Yazîd al-Bisṭâmî, in as-Sahlaǧî, *Nûr*, 112.

<sup>103</sup> This was the phrasing of the idea by Sahl at-Tustarî (ninth century), cf. as-Sarrâǧ, *Lumaʿ*, 188; H. Ritter, in *Oriens*, III (1950), 52. Ibn ʿAbd-al Barr, *ǧâmiʿ*, I, 53 f., quotes al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrî for the same remark with variant, “...except the sessions of scholars.”

<sup>104</sup> Cf. the verses of Sumnûn (ninth century), as cited by as-Sarrâǧ, *Lumaʿ*, 321.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. as-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqât*, 119, l. 17.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. as-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqât*, 58, ll. 9 f. See also al-Muḥâsibî, *Riʿâyah*, 282, l. 17, 283.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. as-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqât*, 203, ll. 8 f. Contrast below, p. 262, n. 1.

(*wajal*), as well as calm assurance (*sakīnah* and *tu'manīnah*).<sup>108</sup> For Sufyān (presumably, ath-Thawrī), knowledge is asceticism (*wara'*), and asceticism is the search for the knowledge by which asceticism is recognized,<sup>109</sup> although for another mystic, Ibrāhīm b. Shaybān al-Qarmīsīnī, knowledge serves exoteric education (*ādāb az-zāhir*), while *wara'* serves the higher goal of esoteric education.<sup>110</sup> Like Sufyān, Yaḥyā b. Mu'ādh (d. 258/871–72) considered asceticism as the source of the direct awareness, without symbolism, of the significance (definition, *ḥadd*) of knowledge.<sup>111</sup> In this respect, as Ibn Nuṣayr (d. 348/959) reminds us, it is not unlike piety (*taqwā*). When piety takes up residence in the heart, it causes the blessings of knowledge to descend upon it.<sup>112</sup>

The higher mysteries of the Ṣūfī path also called for comparisons with knowledge. In the state of sobriety, which is the counterpart of the state of drunkenness, the mystic faces the presence of knowledge under his own control by his own activity.<sup>113</sup> For some Ṣūfīs, ecstatic experience (*wajd*) may be something apart from knowledge. Yet, for others, it may come through knowledge, and again for others, it is knowledge.<sup>114</sup> Even “true reality” (*ḥaqīqah*), the final goal of the mystic search for insight, may be equated with knowledge. Thus, Ruwaym (d. 303/915–16) called the most perfect of realities that which is connected with knowledge. Another mystic, Abū Ja'far aṣ-Ṣaydalānī, distinguished between three kinds of realities in the approved Ṣūfī style: A true reality together with knowledge, a true reality accompanied by knowledge, and a true reality that turns away from knowledge. And still another Ṣūfī, al-Abḥarī (d. ca. 330/941–42), contended that “all true reality is knowledge, and all knowledge is true reality.”<sup>115</sup> However, for

<sup>108</sup> Cf. as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 496, ll. 8 ff. On knowledge *khashyah*, another word for “fear,” which does not qualify as a special term of mysticism, cf. above, p. 140, n. 1, and p. 165, n. 1.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt*, II, 8, ll. 15 f.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 404.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 54, l. 6.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 28, l. 18.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 38, ll. 34 f., apparently as al-Qushayrī's personal comment.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. as-Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 386. The author here appears to follow the *Kūtāb al-Wajd* of Abū Sa'īd Ibn al-A'rābī (d. 341/953, cf. Sezgin, I, 660 f.).

<sup>115</sup> Cf. as-Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 286 f. For al-Abḥarī's remarks, cf. also as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 394, II, 11 f. It may be noted that for Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt*, II, 44, ll. 22 f., the knowledge that is identical with *ḥaqīqah* is the legal-religious knowledge (*ilm ash-shar'*).

Abû Yazîd al-Bisṭāmî, a great gulf separates mere knowledge from the *ḥaqîqah* of Divine Reality: "He who looks at people through (the eyes of) knowledge hates them, but he who looks at them through (the eyes of) True Reality (the Creator) shows mercy to them."<sup>116</sup> Clearly, perfect knowledge was unattainable, as expressed by Abû 'Alî ath-Thaqafî (d. 328/939–40) in a paraphrase of the maxim about God's unknowability: "The end and entelechy of knowledge consist in giving up all hope of reaching the bottom (*kunh*) of it."<sup>117</sup> Knowledge thus was not always accorded the highest rank in the Şûfî canon of mystic qualities, and it sometimes was pronounced a hindrance on the way toward full mystic experience, but it was a concept that haunted Şûfis of all descriptions throughout the entire history of Şûfism.

\* \* \*

The principal concern of Muslim mystics with regard to the concept of *ilm* concerned another aspect of the term. It was the establishment of Şûfism in all its various manifestations as an *ilm*, and here the word is best translated as "science." Indeed, Şûfism developed into a "science" all its own, so much so that al-Ghazzâlî was eventually able to maintain that the views of the various kinds of Muslim religious thinkers showed no real difference as far as practical methods and procedures (*ṭarîq al-'amal*) were concerned, but there was a real and important difference between the theoretical methods (*ṭuruq al-'ilm*) of Şûfism as distinguished from those of the speculative theologians and the philosophers.<sup>118</sup> In other words, Şûfism had become a "science" in its own right.

Beginning with the early ninth century, if not earlier, Şûfis showed a desperate desire to establish what they were attempting to do as an *ilm*. They wanted to prove that they were in no essential way opposed to the *ilm* of the traditionists, but in order to justify their attempts at providing an alternative to traditionist and rationalist theology, they felt that they had to prove that this alternative was no less of an *ilm* than what was done by the other side. For this was the age of science, the age in which systematic knowledge in a wide variety of clearly defined fields became the dominant form of expression for Muslim intellectual aspirations

<sup>116</sup> Cf. as-Sahlaǵî, *Nûr*, 84.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. as-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqât*, 363, ll. 14 f.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mîzân al-'amal*, 221.



and everything, from the Qurʾān to poetry, was provided with all the apparatus of specialized scholarly disciplines. The *ʿilm* of the Ṣūfīs tried very strenuously to appear as a “science” as well as keep in step with the various scientific views of the meaning of knowledge. Many terms in the mystic vocabulary came in the course of time to be described as *ʿulūm* “scientific disciplines” in their own right. Helped by the atomistic element that was inherent in the original concept of *ʿilm*,<sup>119</sup> the Ṣūfīs found no difficulty in speaking of every mystic term as a particular “knowledge” to be acquired by the mystic, and in establishing a hierarchy of such “knowledge,” whose usual apex was the knowledge of the realities of the mystic gnosis—unless preference was accorded to the opposite insight that all such various kinds of knowledge, however titled, meant in fact only one and the same thing, only one “knowledge.”<sup>120</sup>

Already al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) gave literary expression to this concern with setting up Ṣūfism as a “science,” with establishing its legitimacy in the Muslim scheme of things, and with delimiting it from other sciences. He did so in his brief essay entitled *Kitāb al-ʿIlm* “Book on Knowledge.”<sup>121</sup> In the *Riʿāyah*, his main work, al-Muḥāsibī showed himself more interested in the practice of the ethical virtues necessary for leading a life that would please God.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. above, p. 12.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. as-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ*, 457.

<sup>121</sup> Despite repeated efforts, I was unable to gain access to the manuscript of the work preserved in the Ambrosiana in Milan, Ms. Caprotti 204, fols. 18a–21a (= Catalogue Griffini, 460, VI, in *RSO*, VIII [1919–20], 328 f.). (For a manuscript in Istanbul, see Sezgin, I, 641). I have had to rely on the brief description of the contents given by M. Smith, *An Early Mystic*, 57, 98 f. The correctness of the attribution of the *Kitāb al-ʿIlm* to al-Muḥāsibī remains to be established.

Al-Muḥāsibī is further credited with a treatise explaining the meaning of *maʿrifah*, generally entitled *Sharḥ al-maʿrifah*. It is preserved in several manuscripts under different titles. According to the description given by M. Smith, *An Early Mystic*, 53, the author analyses *maʿrifah* in its various types, again applying what in his time was considered scientific procedure. For another manuscript of the work, cf. F. Rosenthal, *Die arabische Autobiographie*, in *Analecta Orientalia*, XIV, 11 f., n. 3 (Rome 1937). An excerpt from the work is contained in the Istanbul manuscript Köprülü, I, 1601, fols. 97b–99b. The anecdote reported by M. Smith, *An Early Mystic*, 11 f., that al-Muḥāsibī had once written a book on *maʿrifah* but destroyed it when his unpreparedness for a true understanding of the subject was driven home to him under questioning by a young Ṣūfī has, it seems, the purpose of exalting the difficulty of gnosis which even a Muḥāsibī was unable to cope with. This imaginary work has certainly nothing to do with the preserved and, indeed, very imperfect treatise.

*ʿilm* is often paired with *ʿamal* in the generally accepted manner. It is employed largely in the common meaning of religious knowledge based upon the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet. It is the knowledge which permits the individual to recognize the religious duties and ethical practices considered by al-Muḥāsibî as incumbent upon his kind of seeker after God. It is one of the things that must be kept pure and free from such dangers as overweening pride and self-delusion. In the *Riʿāyah*, *ʿilm* also appears as a practical synonym of *maʿrifah* and occurs many a time in combination with it, without exhibiting anything more than the usual distinction between the two terms. While *maʿrifah* often expresses acquaintance, awareness, a first realization of or knowledge about something, *ʿilm* expresses the fullness of knowledge of any given subject. There is no special discussion of *ʿilm* in the *Riʿāyah*, even though the word itself is constantly present and its importance makes itself felt.

According to the discussion offered by al-Muḥāsibî in the *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, knowledge falls into three parts. There is a legal knowledge which deals with what is lawful and unlawful in this world and constitutes therefore a kind of “outward” (exoteric) material knowledge. Then, there is a knowledge of the other world, which is “inner” (esoteric) intuitional knowledge. And there is a knowledge of God and of the divine rules as they affect this world and the other world, that is, the true inner meaning of the cosmos, the real goal of the gnostic.<sup>122</sup> The seekers after knowledge should, of course, not seek worldly knowledge<sup>123</sup> and worldly gain but devote themselves to the denunciation of the world, to the knowledge that is light and intuition, that falls like the rain from heaven<sup>124</sup> and induces man to exhibit a greater fear of God. What we have

<sup>122</sup> Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl al-Balkhî (d. 319/931) expressed the idea of the three kinds of knowledge in the epigrammatic manner so beloved by Ṣūfīs: “There are three kinds of knowledge, a knowledge of God (*bi-llāhi*), a knowledge from God (*min Allāhi*), and a knowledge with God (*maʿa Allāhi*). The first knowledge is the knowledge about (*maʿrifah*) God’s attributes. The second knowledge is the knowledge (*ʿilm*) of the exoteric and the esoteric, of what is allowed and what is forbidden, of what is commanded and what is prohibited by the law. And the third knowledge is the knowledge (*ʿilm*) of fear and hope, of love and desire.” Cf. as-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqāt*, 215.

<sup>123</sup> For an eloquent passage on worldly knowledge, cf. the chapter dealing with al-Muḥāsibî’s understanding of *ʿilm* in van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibî*, 78–81.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. M. Smith, *An Early Mystic*, 100 f., 139.

here before us is the process of establishing categories of knowledge in what was considered the accepted scientific manner. By placing Şûfism as such, or, at least, as represented by its most obvious purpose, into one of them, al-Muḥâsibî attempted successfully to press mysticism's claim to being a scientific discipline, just at the right moment and in the right intellectual climate.

It is presently not clear whether or not others preceded al-Muḥâsibî in using the same approach. Possibly, there were others. There can, however, be no doubt that his lead was followed. In the same spirit and, it seems, strongly influenced by al-Muḥâsibî, al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhî made his plea for the acceptance of mysticism among the "sciences" near the end of the ninth century, according to the most likely date. His treatise was entitled *Kitâb Bayân al-ilm* "The Explanation of Knowledge."<sup>125</sup> As the author explains it, he had been accused by some people of wishing to abolish *ilm*. Those people had been under the misconception that *ilm* was identical with jurisprudence (*fiqh*). In their opinion, jurisprudence was the only knowledge by which God is served and the religion of Islam maintained. Anything else was not knowledge but a waste of time and effort. This, al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhî replies, just is not so. *Ilm* is rather a comprehensive term, for the Prophet has said: "Knowledge consists of three things, a clear verse (of the Qur'ân), a well-established *sunnah*, and a fair religious duty (*farîdah*)."<sup>126</sup> Also, Jesus has said: "There are three (kinds of) knowers (*âlim*), a knower of God, a knower of the command of God, and a knower of the command of God who is at the same time a knower of God."<sup>127</sup> Consequently, there are three kinds of knowledge, namely, the knowledge of what is lawful and what is unlawful, which is the legal knowledge of the rules governing this world and which is exoteric material knowledge; the knowledge of the rules governing the other world, which is esoteric intuitive knowledge; and the knowledge of the divine rules as they affect God's creation in both this world and the other world. Each of these three kinds of knowledge has its own subdivisions (according to

<sup>125</sup> Cf. the Ankara Ms. Ismail Saib, I, 1571, fols. 12a–24a. For a note on *ilm*, cf. the edition of al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhî, *Khatm al-awliyâ'*, 115, n. 7. Cf. also the work by al-Ḥusaynî, cited above, p. 172. n. 2.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. below, p. 263.

<sup>127</sup> The text of the manuscript is corrupt and must be reconstituted as indicated in the translation. The statement is ascribed to Sufyân (ath-Thawrî) by Abû Ṭalib al-Makkî, *Qût*, II, 8, ll. 13 f.

scientific Aristotelian procedure, which obviously came naturally to the author). The first knowledge, characterized by the expression “knowers of the command of God,” falls into the two subdivisions of 1. lawful knowledge and 2. unlawful knowledge. The second knowledge comprises all the good and bad ethical qualities, such as asceticism, piety, patience, fear, etc., with its most important basic ingredient being *nîyah* “intention.” Those who possess this knowledge are apparently meant by Jesus when he speaks of “knowers of God,” meaning the sages (*ḥukamâ*). (Here, we are already well within the science of mysticism.) The third knowledge is the knowledge of God and of the way in which He governs His creation. This inexhaustible subject, when properly approached, secures the greatest possible spiritual benefits.<sup>128</sup> All these kinds of knowledge—elsewhere, al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī labels them knowledge of what is allowed and what is forbidden, *ḥikmah* meaning “wisdom” or “philosophy,” and *maʿrifah* meaning “gnosis”<sup>129</sup>—were known to the companions of the Prophet. They preserved them in their memory and did not write them down. Later scholars forgot them in spite of the existence of books in their time, because they were concerned only with their worldly advancement and therefore not receptive to the light of wisdom. The third kind of knowledge is indicated in Jesus’ phrase of “the knowers of God and the knowers of the command of God.” Of them, it can be said that “they are the ones who combine all these kinds of knowledge. They thus know the lawful and the unlawful... They study the supernatural (*ʿilm* [read: *ʿalam*?] *al-malakūt*), and they are aware in their hearts of the majesty of God. Therefore, they serve Him with the knowledge of certainty, as God has said: ‘Indeed, were you to know the knowledge of certainty, you would see Hell’—that is, with their heart—then you would see with the eye of certainty’—tomorrow, in the other world (Qurʾān 102:5–7/5–7).<sup>130</sup> The knowledge of certainty lets one see things by way of

<sup>128</sup> Cf. above, p. 164. For a beautiful exposition of the true knowledge of the mystic sage (*ḥakīm*) as compared to the ordinary knowledge of the scholar (*ʿālim*), cf. al-Junayd, a contemporary of al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī, in his epistle devoted to this subject, in Abdel-Kader, *al-Junayd*, 7 ff., trans., 127 ff., also, 52 f., trans., 172 f.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. the introduction to the edition of al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī, *Khatm al-awliyāʾ*, 85.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. above, pp. 23 ff.

material perception (*taṣwīr<sup>an?</sup>*), whereas the eye of certainty lets one see them by intuition (read: *badīhat<sup>an?</sup>*).”

The desire to find a justification for Ṣūfism as an *‘ilm* then causes al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī to turn back and make certain that the Prophetical tradition quoted above does in fact allude to three different kinds of *‘ilm*, and he tries to find out how the three phrases used in the tradition are to be equated with the three different disciplines. Another tradition speaking of *fiqh* is discussed. In the view of the author, *fiqh*, too, must be understood as referring to a particular scientific discipline, namely, the knowledge of God. In this connection, the reader finds himself referred to the Prophetical tradition that the beginning of knowledge (*ra’s al-‘ilm*) is the knowledge of death and the knowledge of the Lord.<sup>131</sup> The remainder of the treatise is mainly taken up with attacks against those who use *‘ilm* for worldly purposes.

In this way, al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī, expanding upon al-Muḥāsibī, succeeded in substantiating further the endeavors of mystics to claim possession of a scientific discipline of their own. Moreover, he contended that the Ṣūfis were the only ones whose scholarly efforts gave knowledge its due as something requiring completely unselfish devotion. Ṣūfism is not only a “science.” It is the only science deserving the name.<sup>132</sup>

The desire to see Ṣūfism accepted as a “science” is still transparent in the opening pages of the *Luma’* of as-Sarrāj. As-Sarrāj speaks with notable emphasis of “the discipline of Ṣūfism” (*‘ilm at-taṣawwuf*). He describes Ṣūfism as “the mine of all sciences.”<sup>133</sup> Finally, he claims for Ṣūfism to be “the science of the esoteric” (*‘ilm al-bāṭin*). By the tenth century, all this was generally current terminology. *‘Ilm* served as the label for a Ṣūfism considered to be no more and no less than a system of knowing, a “science.”

As-Sarrāj’s contemporary, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, devoted a quite lengthy

<sup>131</sup> Al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī also remarks that “the beginning of divine worship is knowledge. If you know, you have gnosis (‘*r-f*’), and if you have gnosis, you worship.” This is the incipit of one of his *masā’il*, preserved in a manuscript in Leipzig and cited in the edition of al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī, *Khatm al-awliyā’*, 58. The author then goes on to explain that all knowledge rests in the letters (sounds) of the alphabet. Cf. Abū Ḥatīm ar-Rāzī, *Ṣūnah*, I, 66, II, 8.

<sup>132</sup> For various Ṣūfī references to mysticism as “the knowledge,” cf. also below, p. 244.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. as-Sarrāj, *Luma’*, 40.

chapter of his *Qūt* to the discussion of knowledge.<sup>134</sup> In it, he attempted to produce a synthesis between the “knowledge” of Ṣūfism and the legal-traditionalist knowledge of the religious scholars, a synthesis brought to a successful completion by al-Ghazzâlî who used a good deal of his predecessor’s material. Al-Ghazzâlî’s lasting influence and popularity which were denied to Abû Ṭâlib al-Makkî no doubt were the result of the state of evolution Islamic culture had reached by his time. The most decisive factor in his success was, however, his much clearer and more interesting presentation. This made his ideas more acceptable, just as the better, more systematic arrangement of al-Qushayrî’s *Risâlah* made it the authoritative handbook that as-Sarrâj’s *Luma‘* could never be. The summary chapter heading in the *Qūt* for its thirty-first chapter “on knowledge” reveals much of its contents: “Knowledge and details (*tafṣîl*, rather than *tafdîl* ‘preference’) about it. The qualities of scholars. The excellence of the science of gnosis (*‘ilm al-ma‘rifah*) (and certainty) as compared to all other sciences, and an exposition of the path followed by the scholars among the good ancient Muslims. An explanation of the preference (*tafdîl*) shown for the kinds of knowledge consisting in being silent and the path of the two asceticisms (the one of restraint and the one of action?) with regard to knowledge. The difference between exoteric and esoteric knowledge and between the scholars of this world and the scholars of the other world (and the blameworthiness of) evil scholars who devour this world (and are out for worldly gain) with the help of their knowledge. A description of knowledge and the method of instruction (of the early Muslims) and the blame-worthiness of the stories and speculation (*kalâm*) invented by more recent scholars. Statements and actions unknown to the early Muslims, invented by people in their contacts with each other. An explanation of the excellence of faith and certainty as compared to any of the other kinds of knowledge and a warning against independent opinion (*ra‘y*). The meaning of the Prophet’s statement, ‘Seeking knowledge is a religious duty for every Muslim,’ or, ‘Seek knowledge, even if it be (as far away as) China, for seeking knowledge is a religious duty for every Muslim.’”<sup>135</sup> In fact, the first four pages of the chapter are devoted exclusively to a discussion of this statement of the Prophet. Abû Ṭâlib al-Makkî is eager to

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Abû Ṭâlib al-Makkî, *Qūt*, I, 191–II, 64.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. above, p. 89.

prove that no knowledge called “knowledge” only by courtesy, because it deals with certain objects of knowledge, such as medicine, astronomy, poetry, or even jurisprudence and dogmatics, could be meant by the word “knowledge” employed in the *ḥadīth*. What the Prophet had in mind when he used the word “knowledge” was “useful knowledge” (*nāfiʿ* “useful” being much liked by Ṣūfī authors as indicative of their endeavors), the “esoteric knowledge,” the “knowledge of the hearts,” in short, the science of Ṣūfism.

Thereafter, and throughout his chapter on knowledge, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī tries to give additional support to the widely held theory that in early Islam, all knowledge was otherworldly knowledge and that the attribution of any other meaning to “knowledge” took place only at a later stage. Thousands of the men around Muḥammad were “knowers of God,” seekers after faith and certainty, while only a handful among them were interested in legal matters. When they spoke of knowledge, they, as well as the men of the next generation, understood it to mean “the knowledge of certainty and the fear of God” (*ʿilm al-yaqīn wa-t-taqwâ*) and “the knowledge of gnosis and right guidance” (*ʿilm al-maʿrifah wa-l-hudâ*) and even their ordinary formulas of greeting had some pious significance.<sup>136</sup> Their concept of knowledge was eloquently expressed, for instance, by Muʿadh b. Jabal (d. 18/639, one of the trusted lieutenants of the Prophet, and certainly no forerunner of Ṣūfism<sup>137</sup>): “Study knowledge, for studying knowledge is the fear of God. Searching for knowledge is the worship of Him. Learning knowledge is the glorification of Him. Doing research in knowledge is a holy war in His behalf. Teaching knowledge to those who do not know is charity.<sup>138</sup> And lavishing knowledge upon those who deserve it is nearness to God. Knowledge is a friend in loneliness. It is company for him who is all by himself. It is a guide under any circumstances whatever, an ornament among friends, a relative among strangers, and a lighthouse on the road to Paradise. Through knowledge, God lifts up people and makes them guides toward the good (life) who serve as examples to be followed and whose actions are studied and imitated and whose opinions are accepted. Their friendship

<sup>136</sup> Cf. *Qūt*, II, 15 and 42.

<sup>137</sup> In the introductory remarks of his *Ṣifat as-safwâh*, I, 4 (Hyderabad 1355–56), Ibn al-Jawzī rightly protested against the efforts to claim the early Muslims for Ṣūfism simply on the ground of their asceticism, as Ṣūfism implied much more than mere asceticism.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, I, 558, l. 6. Cf. below, pp. 315 and 333, n. 2.

is desired by the angels who touch them with their wings. In consequence, everything wet or dry asks for forgiveness for them, down to the fish and the reptiles of the sea and the wild beasts and the domestic animals of the land, as well as heaven and its stars. Knowledge is the life of the heart after blindness (?), the light of the eyes after darkness, and the strength of the body after weakness. Through knowledge, man reaches the stations of the pious and the highest ranks. Reflecting upon knowledge and learning it are considered equivalent to the performance of fasting. It is an act of obedience to God, of worship of Him, and of declaring His oneness. It constitutes ascetic behavior. It accomplishes the strengthening of family ties. Knowledge is the leader, and action is its follower.<sup>139</sup> It is an inspiration given to the blessed. It is something that is denied to the unfortunate.”<sup>140</sup> Such general praise of knowledge is heard constantly throughout Muslim history, in almost the same words and phrases. Here, however, it is used as an argument, obviously fictitious and unhistorical, to prove the exclusive concern of the ancient Muslims with knowledge, in the Şûfî sense. Abû Ṭâlib al-Makkî in addition makes clever use of association, in order to bring any mention of knowledge into connection with mystic knowledge. Thus, he cites some well-known verses, which he ascribes to one of the sages but which (as in al-Ghazzâlî’s *Ihyâ*) are often ascribed to ‘Alî:

I have noticed knowledge to be of two kinds,  
 Acquired through study (*masmû‘*) and given by nature (*maṭbû‘*).  
 The kind acquired through study is of no use,  
 If there is no knowledge given by nature,  
 Like as the sun is of no use  
 Where the light of the eye is denied,

and then interprets them as referring to the knowledge that is uppermost in his mind, by citing verses of the mystic, al-Junayd:

The science of Şûfism is a knowledge which can be known only  
 By the possessor of natural intelligence in truth known (to possess it).  
 He who does not witness it does not know it.  
 How could the blind man witness the light of the sun!<sup>141</sup>

<sup>139</sup> Cf. below, p. 249. See further as-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqât*, 139, citing Abû ‘Alî (Abû ‘Abd allâh) al-Anṭâkî, who replaces the second half by describing “foresight” (*‘indāyah* = *pronoia*) as the leader of every kind of knowledge.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. *Qût*, I, 199.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. *Qût*, II, 26.



On the other hand, Abû Tâlib al-Makkî devotes an equal amount of space to disputing the value of traditionist religious knowledge. He attacks the “evil scholars” who “devour this world with the help of their knowledge.” He uses the division of all sciences into objectionable and non-objectionable disciplines, in order to show that the non-objectionable disciplines were those cultivated by the early Muslims, who also had no need of writing down their knowledge and becoming authors of books,<sup>142</sup> while the objectionable disciplines, such as grammar, prosody, mathematics, and even systematic jurisprudence, were later inventions not known to the ancients.<sup>143</sup> In sum, his chapter on knowledge serves the purpose of making it clear once more that Şûfism is a scholarly discipline and, in fact, the one and only original scholarly discipline in Islam. Consequently, it is the only true scholarly discipline that deserves cultivation by Muslims, with all the powers of the mind and of the heart at their command. Mysticism is light, and mysticism is a science.

A daring combination of scientific Peripatetic philosophy with mystic speculations on knowledge and, indeed, an adaptation of philosophical thought to basic mystic premises<sup>144</sup> was accomplished by as-Suhrawardî *al-maqtûl*. His efforts led to a startlingly different system of thought. For the “science” of Şûfism, they remained rather inconclusive and superficial, inasmuch as as-Suhrawardî had no patience with historical antecedents and made short shrift of the fundamental Şûfism of earlier times. The most complete and successful attempt to incorporate the Muslim conception of knowledge, such as it had been developed since the ninth century, into the fabric of mystic thought was undertaken, as so many other things, by the fertile genius of as-Suhrawardî’s contemporary, Ibn ‘Arabî. While as-Suhrawardî came from the East of the Muslim world, Ibn ‘Arabî came, from the West, but the lives of both men came to an end in Syria, if under very different circumstances and half a century apart. For Ibn ‘Arabî, “gnostic-and-gnosis (‘*r-f*’) characterizes the one to whom the Lord has permitted to witness himself while gnosis is his state with (all the mystic) states having control over him,” whereas “knower-and-knowledge (‘*l-m*’) characterizes the one to whom God has permitted to witness His divinity

<sup>142</sup> Cf. *Qût*, II, 37 = al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ*, I, 70, trans. Faris, 211.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. *Qût*, II, 47.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. also below, p. 218.

and His essence while knowledge is his state with no (other mystic) state having control over him.”<sup>145</sup> This comparison of gnosis and knowledge would seem to indicate that the higher value is placed by Ibn ‘Arabî upon the latter. Both rank high on the scale of mystic values in his philosophy, but he seems to show a predilection for the wider implications of “knowledge.”<sup>146</sup> Every one of the divine manifestations in the world comes from the “treasure of knowledge.” “Knowledge is the Truth, and the Truth is knowledge,” and “(God’s) Book is His Knowledge.”<sup>147</sup> The recognition of the divine oneness is a knowledge; then, it is state; and then again, it is a knowledge.<sup>148</sup>

In all his works, Ibn ‘Arabî often dealt with knowledge. He may even have written a monograph on the subject which remained unpublished.<sup>149</sup> However, we can safely assume that all he had to say has been spread over the many passages concerned with *‘ilm* of his massive *Futûḥât*, a work, its author claims in his autobiibliography, such as had never been written before and would never be written again. Like all his books, it was not written like ordinary writings and composed in the manner in which ordinary authors compose their works. It had come down to him directly through divine inspiration. The *Futûḥât* starts out with an epistemological discussion. Ibn ‘Arabî explains the different kinds of knowledge that he assumes exist, such as the knowledge of the intellect (*i.e.*,

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Ibn ‘Arabî, *Iṣṭilâḥ aṣ-Ṣūfīyah*, 15, and *Futûḥât*, II, 129. In the *Futûḥât*, “himself” in the definition of gnosis and gnostic is replaced by “no other divine name.” The word “himself” (*nafsah*) does not refer to God but to the gnostic. This reflects the maxim on self-knowledge being the knowledge about the Lord (above, p. 137), and Massignon, *Lexique technique*, 127, for the spurious Ṣūfī claim of having originated it.

For a collection of definitions considered acceptable by Ibn ‘Arabî, cf. his *Kitâb al-Ilâm bi-ishârât ahl al-ilhâm*, 5 (Hyderabad 1367, in Vol. I of *Rasâ’il Ibn ‘Arabî*). Ibn ‘Arabî refers to a *Kitâb al-Ma’rifah* by his pen in *Futûḥât*, II, 66. For works of Ibn ‘Arabî that have the word *ma’rifah* in their titles, cf. Yahia, *Histoire et classification*, 296, 367 ff.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. above, pp. 116 and 167.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Ibn ‘Arabî, *Tarâjüm*, 50. According to his *Hilyat al-abdâl*, 2 (Hyderabad 1367/1948, in Vol. II of *Rasâ’il Ibn ‘Arabî*), “*‘ilm* is the result of *ma’rifah*.”

<sup>148</sup> Ibn ‘Arabî, *Tajalliyât*, 27 (Hyderabad, Vol. II of *Rasâ’il Ibn ‘Arabî*).

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Ṣalâḥ-ad-dīn al-Munajjid, in his edition of Ibrâhīm b. ‘Abdallâh al-Qâri’ al-Baghdâdî, *Manâqib Ibn ‘Arabî*, 68 (Beirut 1959). A *Kitâb Madâr al-‘ilm*, which exists in a manuscript in Istanbul, Yahya Ef. 3701, fols. 17b–20a, has been identified by Yahia, *Histoire et classification*, 348, no. 383a, as identical with *Futûḥât*, I, 34 ff.

rational knowledge), the knowledge of mystic states, attainable only through mystic experience called “taste,” and the knowledge of the secrets, which is a combination of the first two kinds and constitutes the highest form of knowledge in existence.<sup>150</sup> There is another division. It is said to stem from a conference of four learned men from the four directions of the compass who came together in fabled Uzayn in India. They arranged all knowledge according to the elementary features of which existence is composed, according to concepts claimed to go back to Greek philosophy.<sup>151</sup> Ibn ‘Arabî speaks of the relationship between knowledge and the object known<sup>152</sup> and of the various kinds of objects known,<sup>153</sup> of the various ways of attaining knowledge,<sup>154</sup> of the distinction between acquired and “given” knowledge,<sup>155</sup> and of the oneness of all knowledge,<sup>156</sup> taking for all of it his cue from the discussion of the speculative theologians. He also mentions the idea of an assured transmission by many authorities (*tawâtur*) which plays such an important role as a criterion of truth and as a means for the achievement of knowledge in the epistemological efforts of Muslim historians and the science, of *ḥadîth*.<sup>157</sup> For Ibn ‘Arabî, knowledge is a psychological human need greater than the physiological need for food.<sup>158</sup> The legal-religious knowledge can be compared to the food used by the body. Like food, it ought to be consumed only in moderate portions, because too much of it would be of no use and may cause harm. On the other hand, the knowledge that is concerned with the supernatural knows no limitations, and can and ought to be taken in unlimited amounts, if at all possible.<sup>159</sup>

The four large areas of knowledge are logic, mathematics, physics, and metaphysics. Metaphysics is the highest knowledge of them all. All the other kinds of knowledge are subordinated to

<sup>150</sup> Cf. *Futûḥât*, I, 31, also, II, 598, 644 ff.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. *Futûḥât*, I, 38 ff. *Qubbat Uzayn* = Ujjayn.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. *Futûḥât*, I, 43 ff., IV, 84, 403.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. *Futûḥât*, I, 118 f., III, 199.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. *Futûḥât*, I, 253 f., 279, II, 552.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. *Futûḥât*, I, 576, III, 75.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. *Futûḥât*, I, 253 f.: “The knowledge of things is one knowledge (cf. Aristotle), and more (than one) lies in the object of knowledge, and not in its essence.” Cf. also Ibn Sab‘în, *Correspondence philosophique avec l’Empereur Frédéric II*, ed. Ş. Yaltkaya, 93 (Paris 1943).

<sup>157</sup> Cf. *Futûḥât*, I, 34.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Abû Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyah*, IX, 4.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. *Futûḥât*, I, 580, Cf. below, pp. 319 f.

it.<sup>160</sup> All this is, of course, the Greek (Aristotelian) division of the sciences that pretty largely dominated all Muslim scholarship. Life, among the four essential divine attributes, is a necessary condition for the existence of knowledge, which, in turn, outranks the other two.<sup>161</sup> All other knowledge, Ibn ‘Arabî says following Abû Yazîd al-Bisţâmî, is dead knowledge, but Şûfî knowledge comes from the Living One who does not die. Thus, it is the only living, the only valuable knowledge.<sup>162</sup>

Much more could be said about the scattered references from Ibn ‘Arabî dealing with problems of knowledge in his *Futûḥât*. Their sum and substance is given in the second section of the third chapter that has as its subject “knowledge, the object known, and the knower.”<sup>163</sup> It may be offered here in translation, as it is a very learned and at the same time popular exposition of the mystic creed inasmuch as it was affected by the fundamental mysteries of knowledge. As was the custom of Ibn ‘Arabî, a few verses, usually of his own composition, sound the keynote on which the discussion is to proceed:

“Knowledge, the object known, and the knower  
Are three to be considered one.

If you wish, they may as they are be considered  
In the eye of the witness as three.

But the Lord of the supernatural is seen as One.  
There is nothing additional to Him in the heights.

Let it be known to you—may God give you strength!—that knowledge is the attainment by the heart of some matter corresponding to what it is itself, whether this matter is non-existent or existent.<sup>164</sup> Knowledge is the attribute that makes the attainment necessary for the heart. The knower is the heart. And the object known is the matter attained.

The perception (*taṣawwur*) of the reality of knowledge is a very difficult matter. However, with God’s help, I shall give here useful indications to clarify the attainment of knowledge.

Know that the heart is a polished mirror, all of it a surface that

<sup>160</sup> Cf. *Futûḥât*, I, 293.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. *Futûḥât*, I, 293.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. *Futûḥât*, I, 31.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. *Futûḥât*, I, 91 f.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. definition C-6, above, p. 57.

never rusts. If at some time it must be admitted that it has become rusty—in accordance with the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, ‘Hearts may become rusty as does iron, etc.,’<sup>165</sup> which then goes on to say that they can be cleansed by means of the remembrance of God and the reading of the Qur’ān, inasmuch, however, as this belongs to “wise remembrance” (Qur’ān 3:58/51)—, such rust is not meant to be a film extending over the surface of the heart. When the heart closely concerns itself with the knowledge of the causes (of the material world) and is thereby diverted from the knowledge of God, such concern with something other than God constitutes rust upon its surface. It prevents the revelation of the Truth to the heart covered with it, because the divine presence continuously reveals itself as it cannot properly be imagined to be ever veiled to us. Now, when such a heart does not accept (the divine presence) by way of the praiseworthy address of the religious law, because it has accepted something else instead, one speaks of the acceptance of that other thing as “rust, cover, padlock, blindness, encrustation” (Qur’ān 83:14/14), and so on. However, you may truthfully assume that (such a heart) possesses knowledge. This, however, would be a knowledge of something else but God, whereas, in fact, knowledge for those who know God is the knowledge of God. Our interpretation is confirmed by the word of God: ‘They said: Our hearts are under cover from (and therefore not responsive to) what you call us to’ (Qur’ān 41:5/4). In particular, they were under cover from (and therefore not responsive to) that to which the Messenger of God was calling them. Not that they were really under a cover, but they were concerned with something other than that to which they were called. Therefore, they became blind to the perception of what they were called to, and did not see anything. By nature, hearts are always clean, polished, and clear. Every heart in which the divine presence reveals itself inasmuch as it is a Red Ruby which is essential revelation, is the heart of the beholder, the perfecter (or: the one perfected?), the knower, above which there is nobody in any self-revelation. Below it, there is the self-revelation of the attributes, and below these two, the self-revelation of the actions inasmuch as they stem

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<sup>165</sup> Cf. F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd ed., 324, n. 5 (Leiden 1968).

from the divine presence. The heart of the one to whom they do not reveal themselves inasmuch as they stem from the divine presence is the heart that is neglectful of God, that is driven away from nearness to God.

Therefore, look—may God give you success!—at the heart in the light of what we have mentioned, and see whether you can assume that (the heart) is knowledge. This will be found not to be so. And if you say, its essential polish (is knowledge), this is not possible. Rather, (the essential polish) is the cause, just as the appearance of the object known to the heart is the cause. And if you say, the cause that causes the object known to be attained by the heart, this is not possible either. And if you say, the image (or: idea, *mithāl*) of the object known that is impressed upon the soul, that is to say, the perception of the object known, this, again, is not possible. Thus, if you are asked what knowledge is, say, ‘Knowledge is attaining the object perceived as it is itself, provided that attaining it is not impossible.’<sup>166</sup> The knowledge of what is impossible of attainment is precisely its non-attainment, as the Truthful Person (Abû Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddîq) has said, ‘the inability to attain perception is perception.’<sup>167</sup> He thus considered the knowledge of God the non-attainment of it. This should be realized. However, this means non-attainment of (the knowledge of God) as far as acquisition by the intellect is concerned, as something else may be known,<sup>168</sup> but attainment of (the knowledge of God) through His generosity, nobility, and spiritual gifts, as the gnostics, men of vision (*shuhûd*), may know (‘*r-f*’) Him, and not through the power of the intellect by way of its rational speculation.

Complementary remark: Since it has been established that knowledge (*‘ilm*) of something can be achieved only through a knowledge (*ma‘rifah*) that is preceded by the knowledge about (*ma‘rifah*) something else which provides the absolutely necessary relationship between two objects known (*ma‘rifayn*), and since it has been established that between God and His creation, there does not exist any such relationship of genus, species, or individual as does exist between things, we have no previous

<sup>166</sup> Cf. definition C-3, above, p. 56.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. above, p. 141.

<sup>168</sup> It seems necessary to read *yu‘lam*, instead of *ya‘lamuh*.

knowledge of something whereby, through the relationship between the two, we could perceive the essence of the Truth. Take, for instance, our knowledge of the nature of the spheres as being a fifth nature. We could not have known it at all, if we did not have a previous knowledge of the four elements (lit., mothers). When we saw that the spheres did not form part of these (four) natures and had to be considered as different from these (four) elements, we realized that there was a fifth nature, this on the basis of the motion high up in the ether and the air, of the motion down below in the water and the earth, and of the relationship between the spheres and the elements as substances (*al-jawharīyah*), which constitutes a genus embracing the universe, as species (*an-naw'īyah*), as they (the spheres) are a species just as they (the elements) are a species for a single genus, and also as individuals (*ash-shakhṣīyah*). Without this relationship, on the basis of the natures (elements), we would not know anything about the nature of the sphere. There is no relationship between the Creator and the world in these respects. He can thus never be known through a previous knowledge of something else, as some assume by inference from the visible (*shāhid*) to the supernatural (*ghā'ib*) on the basis of knowledge, will, speech, and other (attributes), transferring all that upon the divine (lit., sanctifying it) in analogy to observations made on themselves.

Our opinion concerning our knowledge of God is confirmed by the fact that knowledge is graded according to the objects known and is distinguished in its essence by the distinctions existing within the objects known. The thing by which an object known becomes distinct can be either an essence on the basis of its substantiality, as, for instance, the intellect and the soul, or an essence on the basis of its nature, as, for instance, the heat and the burning of fire. As the intellect is distinguished from the soul on the basis of its substantiality, thus the fire is distinguished from other things, as we have mentioned. Or it can be distinguished by its essence but on the basis of what serves it as a substratum, either as situation (*ḥāl*)—for instance, the sitting of someone who sits, or the writing of someone who writes—, or as formation (*hay'ah*)—for instance, the blackness of what is black, or the whiteness of what is white. This is as far as the perceptions of the intellect go in the opinion of intelligent persons. There is nothing that can be definitely known through it outside what we have described, only through our knowing by what it is distinguished from other things on the basis of its substance, nature, situation, or formation. Whatever does not include these things cannot be known through the intellect, and they do not exist in God. Therefore, the intellect cannot know God inasmuch as it speculates and investigates. How, then, could

the intellect know Him on the basis of its logical speculation (*nazar*, *burhân*) which relies upon<sup>169</sup> sense perception, necessity, or experience! The Creator cannot be perceived on the basis of these principles to which the intellect has recourse in its logical speculation (*burhân*), thus drawing correct existential conclusions (*al-burhân al-wujûdî*). And how could an intelligent person claim that he has come to know His Lord on the basis of logical proof, and that the Creator is known to him! If he were to look at all the technical, natural, and variously created (*takwîniyah*, *inbi'âthîyah*, *ibdâ'îyah*) products and notice how each one of them is ignorant of its producer, he would know that God can never be known through logical proof. It can be known that God exists and that the world needs Him essentially and inescapably. God says: 'O people, you are the ones who need God, while God is unneeding and praiseworthy' (Qur'ân 35:15/16)."

Thus far Ibn 'Arabî on what knowledge is and how it can be attained, and, above all, why God cannot therefore be rationally known, while it is understood that He can be reached through gnosis. Ibn 'Arabî is also aware, as we would expect, of the educational-societal view of knowledge, which he feels free to interpret according to his own theories. He praises the excellence of knowledge.<sup>170</sup> He cites Ibn as-Sîd al-Baṭalyawṣî (d. 521/1127) to the effect that the higher the station is which a person reaches in the world, the less is his knowledge (*'ulûm*), and whenever he gives up his high station in life, his knowledge widens.<sup>171</sup> But the real teacher is God,<sup>172</sup> and the number of *'ulûm* in the world is almost infinite. The gnosis has its number of *'ulûm*, and each one of the stations (*manzil*) on the mystic path can claim to be an *'ilm*.<sup>173</sup>

The power of the concept of "knowledge" is as easily perceptible in the work of Ibn 'Arabî as it is throughout Ṣūfism. Opposed to the dominance of legalistic theological thinking and its view of knowledge and disinclined to any rationalistic determination of knowledge, Ṣūfism has always felt compelled throughout its great history to pay its respects, as it were, to both and, in addition, to

<sup>169</sup> Apparently, *yastanid ilâ* is to be read, instead of the *yustanid ilayh* of the printed text.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. *Futūḥât*, I, 729, III, 532, IV, 502.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. *Futūḥât*, III, 358.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. *Futūḥât*, III, 399 f.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. *Futūḥât*, III, 34, 37, 40, 60, 63, 73 f., etc.



consider itself an *ilm* “systematic knowledge” in the first place, and anything else, such as gnosis and illumination, in the second place. For Şûfis, their *ilm* was the noblest knowledge of all: “If I knew,” said al-Junayd, “that there might be a knowledge nobler than ours underneath the sky I would make haste toward it and toward those who know it, in order to learn from them.”<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma'*, 239. However, as-Suhrawardî (above, p. 167, n. 3) replaces “ours” (*ilmînâ*) by “the true exponents of *ma'rifah*” (*muḥaqqiqân-i-ma'rifet*).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### KNOWLEDGE IS THOUGHT

(Philosophy)

For the unsophisticated reader of the Qur'ân, it was sufficient to assume that numerous explicit statements in the Holy Book provided a satisfactory solution for the problems of the origin and character of knowledge. Muḥammad often says that knowledge “comes” to human beings, that it is “given” or “taught” to them by God, that, in fact, the only knowledge there is the knowledge God has taught mankind beginning with Adam, the first human being. For early Muslims, knowledge was the result of a process of learning, as expressed in the tradition that “knowledge is attained only through study” (*innamâ l-‘ilm bi-t-ta‘allum*).<sup>1</sup> This tradition is, for instance, worked into a verse ascribed to the early gnomic poet, Sâbiq al-Barbarî,<sup>2</sup> or used in a discussion with the caliph, Mu‘âwiyah,<sup>3</sup> or cited by the Şûfî, Abû Sa‘îd al-Kharrâz,<sup>4</sup> or paraphrased by the wise young prince, in the story cycle of Shimâs and Jalî‘âd preserved in the *Arabian Nights*.<sup>5</sup> It was prized as an indication of the down-to-earth simplicity with which early Muslims had approached problems that had become extremely complicated, or, it was often thought, had been made so unnecessarily. However, already in the Qur'ân there are enough hints to show that in the environment of the Prophet, the problems of what knowledge was and how it could be acquired were familiar ones, even if they might not always have been consciously realized.<sup>6</sup>

Such realization came rapidly enough when Islam spread and learned not only about Christian theology based upon Hellenistic

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<sup>1</sup> Among the “canonical” collection, this *ḥadīth* is to be found only in al-Bukhârî, cf. above, p. 79. It would not be correct to assume that *‘ilm* here is meant to be restricted to traditional knowledge. Cf. also Abû Khaythamah, nos. 114 and 115.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi‘*, II, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. az-Zubayr b. Bakkâr, *Jamharat nasab Quraysh*, ed. Maḥmûd M. Shâkir, I, 513 (Cairo 1381-/1962-), where the text has *min* for *bî*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 230.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Arabian Nights*, ed. W. H. Macnaghten, IV, 399 (Calcutta and London 1839-42).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. above, p. 31.

philosophy but also about Greek logic and epistemology which had conquered the East long before Muḥammad, principally in the name of Aristotle. Aristotelian logic was probably among the earliest Greek materials made available in Arabic translation,<sup>7</sup> and it might very well have exercised its influence at the very beginnings of the Muslim concern with knowledge. However this might have been, Greek logic became the foundation of all Muslim epistemology as the result of the translation activity of the ninth century. It stayed on to form the only systematic scientific framework available to Muslim scholars for intellectual expression from that time on. Religious opposition developed to it almost instantly and never stopped growing and gaining vocal supporters. But embattled as it was, logic always found its steadfast champions who defended its usefulness and, indeed, indispensability as a necessary instrument for all scholarly activity. Logic was considered and referred to as a “craft” or “technique” (*ṣināʿah*) but also, and perhaps with greater frequency, as an *ʿilm*, a scholarly discipline.<sup>8</sup> It was the science that produced certain knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-yaqīn*).<sup>9</sup> Logic provided the justification and the system of classification for scholarly and scientific disciplines.<sup>10</sup> It influenced the discussions of *ḥadīth* scholars and historians as to the possible ways of attaining to the “truth.”<sup>11</sup>

The discussion of epistemology thus did not remain restricted to concerned philosophers and professional logicians. It spread to form the foundations of systematic theology and jurisprudence, and in this way penetrated right to the core of Muslim thinking. The philosophical view of the concept of knowledge was expressed primarily in the works of scholars directly concerned with the study of logic, but then again, it found expression in the works dealing with the *uṣūl al-ʿilm*, the “principles,” or, more literally, the “roots” of knowledge, that is, systematic speculative theology (*kalām*), and it also gained a strong foothold in the works on the

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the discussion about the translation ascribed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, possibly a son of the famous littérateur, which was started by P. Kraus, in *RSO*, XIV (1934), 1–14.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Fārābī, for instance, made indiscriminating use of both *ʿilm al-mantiq* and *ṣināʿat al-mantiq*, and this was the usual state of affairs.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Ibn Sabʿīn, *Correspondence philosophique*, 31.

<sup>10</sup> Cf., for instance, the specimens of translations of relevant texts in Rosenthal, *Fortleben*, 77 ff.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 201 ff.

*uṣūl al-fiqh*, the principles of jurisprudence. The attitudes of the representatives of these disciplines toward the concept of knowledge are the main concern of the present chapter. Since, however, the starting point of it all was works written in Greek, it may be well first to compare briefly the Arabic terminology employed in translating Greek words for mental activity into a language very different from Greek in structure and conceptualization.

### 1. GRAECO-ARABIC TRANSLATION TERMINOLOGY

In the realm of abstract terminology, the consistent translation of a term from one language by another term in the second language is an obvious impossibility, as we have already often seen in the preceding pages. Not even those translators into Arabic from Greek or Syriac who preferred the word-by-word "transposition" method of translation would seem to have attempted it. Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq and his school of translators, who dominated Arabic translation activity, were opposed to the transposition method. They preferred a method of translation according to the sense, and in it, there was certainly no room for pedantic consistency in reproducing the vocabulary used for mental processes. Yet, it was not only the overall method of translation which determined the attitude toward consistency in the choice of words. The subject matter of the works translated, too, quite naturally exercised a certain influence in this respect. Thus, the translations of the Aristotelian corpus show considerable consistency in translating crucial abstract terms, much more so than is evident in the more casual translations of works in other fields, especially if these were works of a more popular character. The particular problem that abstract epistemological terms posed for the understanding in their transition from one language to another did not remain unnoticed by Muslim scholars. Interestingly enough, it has found expression precisely in the case of "knowledge." In eleventh-century Spain, Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr made the statement that "it has been said (*fi-mā dhakarū*) that (the word equivalent to) *al-'ilm* among people who do not use the Arabic language may be translated in Arabic by *'ilm*,<sup>12</sup> or it may be translated by *ma'rifah*, or it may be translated by *fahm*."<sup>13</sup> It is natural to assume that Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr's authorities in this case were his own contemporaries

<sup>12</sup> "By *'ilm*" (*'ilm<sup>m</sup>*) is omitted in the printed text.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jāmi'*, II, 37.

and that the foreign languages they had in mind were the Romance languages (including Latin). Statements of a similar kind were no doubt often made by the translators from Greek and Syriac, even if they have not been preserved.<sup>14</sup>

The following tabulations have been compiled from selected passages of Aristotle's *Categories*, translated by Ishâq b. Hunayn; the *Prior Analytics*, apparently translated by a certain Theodore and corrected by Hunayn;<sup>15</sup> the translation of the *Hermeneutics* done by Ishâq b. Hunayn, for which the glossary added by I. Pollak to his edition has been used;<sup>16</sup> and the first half of the *Physics*, also translated by Ishâq.<sup>17</sup> Reference to all these Aristotelian sources is made by the siglum **Ar**. Further sources used are Galen's *Compendium of Plato's Timaeus*, probably translated by 'Îsâ b. Yahyâ b. Ibrâhîm, of the school of Hunayn, here designated **G** and used in the glossary added to the edition of the text by P. Kraus and R. Walzer;<sup>18</sup> the *Introduction into Arithmetic* by Nicomachus of Gerasa in the translation of Thâbit b. Qurrah (d. 288/901), called here **N**, following the glossary provided by the editor, W. Kutsch;<sup>19</sup> the *Monosticha* of Pseudo-Menander translated by a certain Işţifan who is probably identical with Hunayn's pupil, Stephen, the son of Basilius, here called **M**;<sup>20</sup> and the *Tabula Cebetis* whose translator is not known but which in any case was translated before the middle of the tenth century and probably much earlier, here called **C**.<sup>21</sup> It is obvious that the limited amount

<sup>14</sup> Where there was no pressing need for doing translations, the problem of translation could be mixed up with that of interpretation. This was done by Ibn Taymiyah, *Naqd al-mantiq*, ed. M. Hâmid al-Fiqr, 97 f. (Cairo 1370/–1951). Ibn Taymiyah speaks of word-by-word translation (and the interpretation of words), translation according to the sense (and the realization of the meaning intended), and, as a third step, the process of proving the correctness of the understanding reached. This is in connection with the proper understanding of the Qur'ân. It is interesting here to observe the connection of translation method with logic.

<sup>15</sup> Both texts have been published by Badawî, *Mantiq Aristû*.

<sup>16</sup> *Die Hermeneutik des Aristoteles in der arabischen Übersetzung des Ishâq Ibn Hunayn*, ed. I. Pollak (Leipzig 1913, *AKM* 13, 1).

<sup>17</sup> Above, p. 54, n. 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Galen's Compendium Timaei Platonis*, ed. P. Kraus and R. Walzer (London 1951, *Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevi, Plato Arabus*).

<sup>19</sup> See above, p. 24, n. 1.

<sup>20</sup> See above, p. 101, n. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Tabula Cebetis Graece, Arabice, Latine*, ed. J. Elichmann (and C. Salmasius) (Leiden 1640); Miskawayh, *Jâwîdhân Khiradh*, ed. 'Abd-ar-Rahmân Badawî, 229–62 (Cairo 1952).

of sources consulted makes it inadvisable and, in fact, impossible to draw any definite conclusions. This could come only from the systematic sifting of a large number of works translated by different translators. Moreover, the picture may be distorted to a certain degree by possible Syriac intermediaries. No attention has been paid here to the problems that could arise from this situation.

| Greek                                              | Arabic                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>agnoia</i>                                      | <i>jahl</i> (Ar, G, M), <i>al-jahl wa-qillat al-ma'rifah</i> (M), <i>ghurûb al-'ilm</i> , <i>ghurûb al-fahm</i> (C)                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <i>agnôstos</i>                                    | <sup>l</sup> <i>-l-m</i> + negation (Ar)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <i>akriboun</i> , <i>akribôs</i>                   | <i>yaqîn<sup>an</sup></i> (Ar), <sup>r</sup> <i>-r-f</i> and various other circumlocutions (N, p. 118)                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <i>amathês</i> , <i>amathia</i>                    | <sup>l</sup> <i>-l-m</i> + negation (C), <i>qillat (al-ma'rifah wa-)l-adab</i> (G)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <i>anaisthêsia</i>                                 | <i>sh-<sup>r</sup></i> + negation (Ar), <i>ghayr hîss</i> (G)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <i>apistia</i>                                     | <i>j-h-d</i> (Ar)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <i>aphrosynê</i> , <i>aphrôn</i>                   | <i>jahl</i> , <i>jâhil</i> (C)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <i>boulê</i>                                       | <i>ra'y</i> , <i>fikr</i> (M)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <i>gignôskein</i>                                  | <sup>r</sup> <i>-r-f</i> (Ar, M, C) <sup>22</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <i>gnômê</i>                                       | <i>ra'y</i> (M)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <i>gnôrzein</i>                                    | <sup>r</sup> <i>-r-f</i> (Ar), <sup>l</sup> <i>-l-m</i> (M)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <i>gnôrimos</i>                                    | <i>ma'rif</i> (Ar, N)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>gnôsis</i>                                      | <i>ma'rifah</i> (N)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <i>diaginôskein</i>                                | <sup>l</sup> <i>-l-m</i> , <sup>r</sup> <i>-r-f</i> (N)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <i>dianoia</i> , <i>dianoieisthai</i>              | <i>dhihn</i> , <i>rawîyah</i> , <i>'aql</i> (Ar), <i>fikrah</i> (Ar, cf. Walzer, below, n. 2), <i>afhâm</i> (N), + <i>theou</i> : <i>'ilm Allâh</i> (N), <i>w-h-m V</i> (G), <i>f-k-r</i> (N)                                                                                                                                       |
| <i>didaskein</i> , <i>didaxis</i> , <i>didachê</i> | <i>'ilm</i> (G)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <i>dokein</i> , <i>doxa</i>                        | <i>z-n-n</i> (Ar, G, N, C), <sup>23</sup> <i>r-<sup>2</sup>y</i> , <i>w-h-m V</i> , <sup>l</sup> <i>-q-d VIII</i> (Ar); <i>az-zann wa-l-hisbân</i> , <i>fî-mâ ahsibu</i> , <i>hâkadhâ</i> , <i>ka-annahû</i> , also left unexpressed (C); true <i>doxa</i> : <i>fikr haqîqî</i> (G); <i>koinê doxa</i> : <i>'ilm muta'âraf</i> (Ar) |
| <i>eidenai</i>                                     | <sup>l</sup> <i>-l-m</i> , <sup>r</sup> <i>-r-f</i> (Ar), <i>b-y-n II</i> (?) (N); <i>êidei . . . epistato</i> : <sup>r</sup> <i>-r-f . . . ma'rifah</i> (C)                                                                                                                                                                        |

<sup>22</sup> In the brief work of Galen translated by Ḥunayn, published by P. Bachmann, *Galens Abhandlung darüber, dass der vorzügliche Arzt Philosoph sein muss* (Göttingen 1966, *Nachrichten, Akademie der Wiss. in Göttingen, philol.-hist. Kl.*, 1965, 1), with a detailed comparative glossary, *gignôskein* is also once translated by *f-h-m*. The text is too brief to permit any generalizations, but it would seem that *f-h-m* was here a preferred term of the translator. *F-h-m II* is also once used to translate *didaskein*. Note further *exheuriskein* translated by <sup>r</sup>*-r-f*, *ekmanthanein* by <sup>l</sup>*-l-m*, and the use of *sinâ'ah*, ordinarily translating *technê*, for *methodos* and *theôria*, if combined with *manṭiq*. Logic is also rendered *'ilm al-manṭiq*.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. R. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic*, 95–97 (Oxford 1962).

| Greek                         | Arabic                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>ennoein, ennoia</i>        | <i>w-q-f</i> 'alâ (G), <i>w-h-m</i> V (N), <i>wahm</i> (Ar), <i>ma'nâ</i> (N)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <i>epignôsis</i>              | 'ilm (N)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <i>epinoein, epinoia</i>      | <i>f-h-m</i> , <i>w-h-m</i> V, <i>w-j-d</i> (N), <i>wahm</i> (Ar)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <i>episkopein</i>             | 'm-l V (Ar), <i>b-h-th</i> (G), <i>f-h-s</i> , <i>n-z-r</i> (N)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <i>epistasthai</i>            | <i>yaqîn</i> (Ar), 'l-m (N, C), 'r-f (M, C)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <i>epistêmê</i>               | 'ilm (Ar, G, N), ( <i>al-</i> ) 'ilm <i>al-yaqîn</i> , 'ilm <i>al-haqq al-yaqîn</i> (N), <sup>24</sup> <i>fahm</i> , <i>ma'rîfat al-yaqîn</i> , <i>ma'rîfat al-'aql</i> , <i>ma'rîfat an-nafs wa-l-fahm</i> (C); <i>epistêmai: al-'ilm wa-l-idrâk</i> (N); <i>hê epistême tôn sympherountôn: al-ma'rîfah wa-l-yaqîn wa-l-'aql</i> (C) |
| <i>epistêmôn</i>              | 'âlim (Ar)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <i>hêgeisthai</i>             | <i>z-n-n</i> (C)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <i>theôrein, theôria</i>      | <i>n-z-r</i> , 'l-m ( <i>Physics</i> , p. 265), 'q-l, 'm-l V (Ar) (among many other translations)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <i>theôrêma</i>               | 'ilm (N)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <i>katalêpsis</i>             | <i>idrâk</i> (N) (see above, p. 56)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <i>katanoein</i>              | 'l-m (Ar)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <i>legein</i>                 | 'q-d VIII (Ar); <i>moi eipe: a'limnî</i> (C)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <i>logizesthai, logismos</i>  | <i>fikr</i> (Ar, G), <i>fikrah</i> (M), <i>hîsbân</i> (N)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <i>mathêma (mathêmatikos)</i> | 'ilm ( <i>ta'âlm</i> , <i>ta'lîmî</i> , <i>ta'âlmî</i> ) (Ar, N, C)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <i>manthanein, mathêsis</i>   | 'l-m V (Ar, N, M)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <i>methodos</i>               | 'ilm ( <i>Physics</i> , p. 165 <sup>25</sup> ) (Ar), <i>tarîq (al-'ilm)</i> (N)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <i>mnênoneuein</i>            | <i>dh-k-r</i> , <i>yufakkira fâ-ya'lama</i> (C)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <i>noein</i>                  | <i>w-h-m</i> V (Ar, G, N), <i>f-h-m</i> (Ar, N), ( <i>dh-h-n</i> ) (Ar)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>noêtos, noêma</i>          | <i>ma'qûl</i> (Ar, N), <i>mafhûm</i> (N)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <i>nomizein</i>               | <i>z-n-n</i> (Ar, N, C), <i>w-h-m</i> V, 'q-d VIII (Ar), 'l-m (M)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <i>nous</i>                   | 'aql, <i>nafs</i> (M)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <i>oiesthai</i>               | <i>w-h-m</i> V (the common usage of Ar), <i>z-n-n</i> , <i>r-'y</i> (Ar, N), ('q-d VIII) (Ar)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <i>horan (idein)</i>          | <i>w-q-f</i> 'alâ (Ar)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <i>paideia, paideusi</i>      | 'd-b (M, C)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <i>paradechesthai</i>         | 'r-f VIII (Ar)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <i>pistis, pisteuein</i>      | <i>ṣ-d-q</i> (M), <i>taṣdîq</i> (Ar), <i>amânah</i> (M)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>pragmateia</i>             | <i>ṣinâ'ah</i> (Ar); <i>pragmateiai: fûmûn al-'ilm</i> (Ar)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <i>prosechein</i>             | <i>f-h-m</i> (C)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <i>skeptesthai, skopein</i>   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <i>skepsis, skemma</i>        | <i>n-z-r</i> , <i>b-h-th</i> (Ar, N), <i>f-h-s</i> , 'm-l V (N)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <i>sophia, sophos</i>         | <i>hikmah</i> , <i>hakîm</i> (C)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <i>syndein, syneidêsis</i>    | 'r-f (N), <i>ma'rîfah bi-n-nafs</i> (M)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

<sup>24</sup> Cf. above, p. 24, n. 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Hê methodos hêmin peri . . . : qaṣḍunâ bi-hâdhâ l-'ilm.*

| Greek                            | Arabic                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>synhienai</i>                 | ʿ-r-f, ʿ-l-m, f-h-m (C)                                                                                                               |
| <i>sôphrôn</i>                   | ʿâqil (M)                                                                                                                             |
| <i>hypolambanein, hypolêpsis</i> | ʿ-q-d VIII, ʿ-l-m, w-h-m V, kh-ṭ-r bi-bâl—(Ar), <i>zann</i> ( <i>Topics</i> 146b1 f. = Badawî, <i>Manṭiq Aristû</i> , 650), h-d-d (N) |
| <i>philosophia</i>               | ʿilm ( <i>Physics</i> : <i>darasû l-ʿilm</i> ), <i>falsafah</i> (Ar)                                                                  |
| <i>phronein, phronêsis</i>       | f-h-m (G, M), ʿ-l-m (N), ʿ-q-l (M); <i>eu phronein</i> : <i>ḥusn az-zann</i> (M)                                                      |
| <i>phronêma</i>                  | r-ʿ-y (M)                                                                                                                             |
| <i>phronimos</i>                 | ʿâqil (M, C)                                                                                                                          |

\* \* \*

| Arabic                         | Greek                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>adab</i>                    | <i>paideia, paideusis</i> <sup>26</sup>                                                                                                                                             |
| ʿ-m-l V                        | <i>theôrein, episkopein, skopein</i>                                                                                                                                                |
| <i>amânah</i>                  | <i>pistis</i>                                                                                                                                                                       |
| b-h-th                         | <i>skopein, episkopein, skemma</i>                                                                                                                                                  |
| j-h-d                          | <i>apistia</i>                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <i>jahl</i>                    | <i>agnoia</i>                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <i>ḥadd</i>                    | <i>hypolêpsis, horos, logos</i>                                                                                                                                                     |
| (h-s-s) <i>ghayr ḥiss</i>      | <i>anaisthêsia</i>                                                                                                                                                                  |
| h-s-b, <i>ḥisbân</i>           | <i>dokein, doxa, logismos</i>                                                                                                                                                       |
| h-k-m                          | <i>sophos, sophia</i>                                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>idrâk</i>                   | <i>epistêmê, katalêpsis</i>                                                                                                                                                         |
| dh-h-n                         | <i>dianoia; raʿaynâ bi-dh-dhihn: noein</i> ( <i>Physics</i> , p. 419)                                                                                                               |
| r-ʿ-y                          | <i>oiesthai, dokein, doxa, boulê, gnômê, phronêma</i>                                                                                                                               |
| <i>rawîyah</i>                 | <i>dianoia</i>                                                                                                                                                                      |
| sh-ʿ-r + negation              | <i>lanthanein, anaisthêsia; layta shiʿrî: introduction to a question</i>                                                                                                            |
| ṣ-d-q, <i>taṣdîq</i>           | <i>pisteuein, pistis</i>                                                                                                                                                            |
| ṣinâʿah                        | <i>pragmateia</i>                                                                                                                                                                   |
| z-n-n                          | <i>dokein</i> (very frequent everywhere), <i>oiesthai</i> (three times in <i>Physics</i> ), <i>nomizein</i> (once in <i>Physics</i> ), ( <i>eu phronein, hêgeisthai, hypolêpsis</i> |
| ʿ-r-f, <i>maʿrifah</i>         | <i>gignôskein, gnôrizein, eidenai, epistasthai, diaginôskein, synidein, akriboun, gnôsis, syneidêsis, epistêmê, synhienai; qilat al-maʿrifah wa-l-adab: amathia, amathestatos</i>   |
| <i>maʿrûf</i>                  | <i>gnôrimos</i>                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <i>al-ʿulûm al-mutaʿarafah</i> | <i>koinai doxai</i>                                                                                                                                                                 |
| ʿ-r-f VIII                     | <i>paradechesthai</i>                                                                                                                                                               |

<sup>26</sup> Cf. also Afnan, *Philosophical Terminology*, 91 f.



| Arabic                      | Greek                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ‘q-d VIII                   | <i>nomizein, hypolambanein, legein, (with raʾ) lambanein (tên doxan), oiesthai, doxa</i>                                                                                                 |
| ‘q-l                        | <i>theôrein, phronein</i>                                                                                                                                                                |
| ‘aql                        | <i>dianoia, nous, phronêsis</i>                                                                                                                                                          |
| ‘âqil                       | <i>phronimos, sôphrôn</i>                                                                                                                                                                |
| ma‘qûl                      | <i>noêtos, noêma</i>                                                                                                                                                                     |
| ‘l-m                        | <i>eidenai, katanoein, hypolambanein, synhienai (cf. also mnêmo-neuein), diagnôskein, epistasthai, phronein, gnôrizein, nomi-zein, legein</i>                                            |
| ‘âlim                       | <i>epistêmôn</i>                                                                                                                                                                         |
| lâ yu‘lam                   | <i>agnôstos</i>                                                                                                                                                                          |
| ‘ilm                        | <i>epistêmê, methodos, theôria, didachê, epignôsis, theôrêma, (da-rasû...) philosophia; ‘ilm Allâh: dianoia theou; funûn al-‘ilm: pragmateiai; al-‘ulûm al-muta‘ârafah: koinai doxai</i> |
| ta‘lîm                      | <i>didaskhein, didaxis</i>                                                                                                                                                               |
| ta‘âlim, ta‘lîmî, ta‘âlîmî  | <i>mathêmata, mathêmatikos</i>                                                                                                                                                           |
| ‘l-m V, ta‘allum            | <i>manthanein, mathêsis</i>                                                                                                                                                              |
| ma‘nâ                       | <i>ennoia<sup>27</sup></i>                                                                                                                                                               |
| f-h-š                       | <i>episkopein, skepsis</i>                                                                                                                                                               |
| f-k-r, fikr(ah)             | <i>logismos, doxa, dianoeisthai, boulê, logizesthai (cf. also mnêmo-neuein)</i>                                                                                                          |
| f-h-m                       | <i>noein, phron(êsis), phronein, epinoein, synhienai, prosechein, epistêmê</i>                                                                                                           |
| n-z-r, nazâr                | <i>theôrein, skopein, skeptesthai, (n-z-r... ‘l-m) gnôrizein, episko-pein, skepsis, theôria</i>                                                                                          |
| w-j-d                       | <i>epinoein</i>                                                                                                                                                                          |
| w-q-f ‘alâ                  | <i>horan, ennoein</i>                                                                                                                                                                    |
| wahm, w-h-m V <sup>28</sup> | <i>noêsis, noein, nomizein, oiesthai, hypolambanein, hypolêpsis, epinoia, ennoia, doxa, dokein (Physics, pp. 324, 405), en-noein, epinoein</i>                                           |
| yaqîn                       | <i>(al-)‘ilm al-yaqîn: epistêmê; ya‘lamu yaqînan: akribôs eisetai (Categories, p. 28); hâl al-‘ilm wa-l-yaqîn: to eidenai kai to epistasthai (Physics, p. 1)</i>                         |

Lexical comparisons in such bare outlines are quite obviously of limited validity. A good deal depends on the context, both Greek and Arabic. The more unusual equivalents, in particular, may owe their origin to idiomatic and syntactic peculiarities of

<sup>27</sup> For some other equivalents, cf. Afnan, *Philosophical Terminology*, 115.

<sup>28</sup> For *wahm* = *phantasia*, cf. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic*, 96.

either the one language or the other. It must also not be forgotten that authors who wrote in Greek so widely apart in time and on such widely different intellectual levels differed markedly in their linguistic usage. The lists above are incomplete in that they do not convey the right impression as to the possible variety of equivalents, especially in the cases of more common words. The equivalents tabulated are only a selected few out of all the numerous possibilities. Furthermore, an important element to be considered carefully would be frequency figures. They have not been included here, because no useful frequency figures could be obtained without an exhaustive lexicographical study of all the material. As indicated, there are, for instance, many possible translations for *dokein*, but *z-n-n* is the one employed by far most frequently and most consistently, at least in the works of Aristotle.

*Ilm* most commonly renders *epistêmê*. *Ma'rifah* does not have any such clear-cut equivalent. Although 'r-f would seem to be the preferred translation for *gignôskein* and related words, both 'r-f and 'l-m are used to render *eidenai*. In the material sifted, *epistêmê* is never rendered simply *ma'rifah*, but some combinations with *ma'rifah* do occur in connection with the translation of the Greek word. However, it should be noted that in some translations from the Greek, *ma'rifah* may indeed take the place of *epistêmê*. Thus, the author of the *Kitâb as-Sa'âdah* cites Socrates to the effect that "all virtues come into being only through *ma'rifah*; they just are *ma'rifah*."<sup>29</sup> This renders the statement found in both the *Magna Moralia* and the *Eudemian Ethics* (1182a16 and 1216b3 ff.) that Socrates had declared all virtues to be *epistêmai*. Aristotle considered this statement not true, but it was accepted Stoicism.<sup>30</sup>

*Ilm* is used in Arabic more often than is *epistêmê* in the corresponding Greek texts. The Arabic word is needed for referring to the individual scholarly and scientific disciplines, for which Greek

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Kitâb as-Sa'âdah*, 412.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, ed. H. von Arnim, II, 30, l. 36 (reprint Leipzig 1923–24). For Plato's equation of virtue with knowledge, cf., for instance, N. Gulley, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (London and New York, n.y. [1961 ?, 1962 ?]). Western Hermeticism believed that "the wickedness of a Soul is Ignorance... the virtue of the Soul is Knowledge; for he that knows, is both good and religious, & already Divine," cf. C. L. Marks, *Thomas Traherne and Hermes Trismegistus*, in *Renaissance News*, XIX (1966), 126.

uses the feminine singular of the adjectival formation. The great favor the word *ilm* enjoyed in Arabic also shows itself in other ways. On p. 94 of the translation of the *Physics* 194a18, we find *ilm* four times as against the single occurrence of *gnôrizein* in the Greek passage. On p. 97, *ya'rifu* is taken up by *ya'lamu*, although only one verb is to be found in the Greek text. The root *ʿ-l-m* was also employed by the translator of the *Tabula Cebetis* in places where it did not have any counterpart in Greek.

The most impressive aspect of the tabulation is, however, something that is hardly unexpected. This is the tremendous variety of ways in which the vast realm of mental activity of some sort or other can be expressed in both Greek and Arabic. This means that no general rule for the identification of terms is applicable in any given instance. Only where a firm school tradition took root, as in the case of the translations of Aristotle and by Ḥunayn, is there a noteworthy amount of consistency. Even there, exceptions to the use of what seems to be the preferred equivalent are quite frequent. When the era of translation came to an end and contact with the original languages was completely lost, the process became stabilized inasmuch as the terminology employed in the existing translations by then was the only one available and no new variations were able to arise, except through the creative forces within the Arabic language. Individual authors were at liberty to make use of the terminological variety produced by the efforts of the translators and to interpret it according to their liking and insight. *Ilm*, of course, had acquired a life quite independent from whatever might have been the Greek term it served to translate.

## 2. LOGIC, "THE SCIENCE OF KNOWLEDGE"

*Manṭiq* (*nuṭq*) in Arabic means "speech." It was chosen to serve as a literal and artificial translation of the technical meaning of Greek *logos*. "The science of speech" (*ilm al-manṭiq*) thus became the Muslim term for logic. Scholars had occasionally to remind themselves as well as their readers that *manṭiq* had in fact two vastly different meanings and that it was important to know which of these was intended in a given discussion. Thus, Ibn Ḥazm says that "the *nuṭq* mentioned in this discipline is not speech (*kalām*). It is the discernment among things and the thinking about the

sciences and crafts, business enterprises and the management of affairs.”<sup>31</sup>

Logic was for the Muslims the “organ” or “instrument” (*âlah*), the instrument for logical speculation (*âlat an-naẓar*),<sup>32</sup> the instrument for each discipline (*ilm*) and the means enabling the student to get at its real meaning.<sup>33</sup> It explained, and stood for, every one of the disciplines of knowledge (?).<sup>34</sup> It was the canon (*qânûn*),<sup>35</sup> providing the rules and norms that were applicable to all human knowledge and on which all human knowledge rested. It was the science of the scales (*ilm al-mîzân*),<sup>36</sup> weighing the correctness of every statement. It was compared to “an equilibrating standard (*iyâr mu‘addil*) by which the objects of knowledge are weighed.”<sup>37</sup> It was “the leader of the sciences” or “chief science” (*ra’is al-‘ulûm*), the study of which had to come first and was considered by some scholars as a religious duty obligatory upon every individual (and not only upon the community of Muslims), because it furnished the necessary evidence for man’s knowledge of his Creator.<sup>38</sup> It was, in a word, “the science of knowledge” (*ilm al-ilm*) or “the science of the sciences” (*ilm al-‘ulûm*).<sup>39</sup> Its purpose was to distinguish right from wrong, truth from falsehood. It was “to provide

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *at-Taqrîb li-hadd al-mantiq*, ed. Ihsân ‘Abbâs, 33 (Beirut, n.y. [1959]). All the references given in this chapter could be multiplied *ad infinitum*. In fact, none would be necessary.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Ibn Kammûnah, in the philosophical treatise completed in Dhû l-Qa‘dah 676/April 1278 and preserved in the Istanbul Ms. Aya Sofia 2446, fols. 1–177b, cf. fol. 3a. In the Aya Sofya manuscript, the treatise precedes Ibn Kammûnah’s similar work, *al-Hikmah al-jadidah*.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Ibn Hindû, *Miftâh at-ṭibb*, ch. 10, in Ms. Bursa Haraççı 1120, fol. 64b.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Taqrîb*, 202. The text is doubtful: *al-ibârah ‘alâ kull ilm*. It should be *an*, instead of *alâ*. The correct reading may be *al-iyâr* “standard.”

<sup>35</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Maqâsid*, I, 6, who combines *qânûn*, *mîzân*, and *mîyâr* all in one sentence; Ibn Kammûnah (above, n. 2).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Tâshköprüzâdeh, *Miftâh as-sa‘adah*, I, 243.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. al-‘Amirî, *I‘lâm*, 95.

<sup>38</sup> Tâshköprüzâdeh, *Miftâh as-sa‘adah*, I, 235. Contrast below, p. 206.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Abû l-Barakât, *Mu‘tabar*, I, 226, also, III, 11, 211, 214. When Ibn ‘Arabî, *Futûhât*, II, 282, speaks of *ilm al-ilm*, he has in mind the discipline dealing with mystic theory, as against the *ilm al-‘amal*, the discipline dealing with mystic practice. This appears to be meant also with *Kitâb ‘Ilm al-ilm*, to which Şadr-ad-dîn al-Qônawî makes frequent reference in his *Nafahât*. The vocalization *ilm al-ilm* is clearly intended by these mystics, but apparently it is *‘alam al-ilm* in the description of *bayân* “good style” as “the banner of knowledge”, cited by ath-Tha‘alibî, *Yâtîmah*, IV, 208 (Damascus 1304), as an epigram of Abû l-Faṭḥ al-Bustî.

all the rules (*qawânîn*) that have the task of setting the intellect straight and of directing man toward what is right and toward the truth regarding any of the *intelligibilia* with respect to which man may possibly err, all the rules that can preserve him from errors and mistakes with respect to the *intelligibilia*, and all the rules for checking on the *intelligibilia* with respect to which one cannot be certain that someone did not err in the past." As the individual disciplines teach the particular rules applicable to their particular problems, thus logic supplies the general theoretical basis. If, for instance, grammar teaches the rules governing one particular language, logic teaches the rules applicable to all languages in general.<sup>40</sup> There is no end to the words of praise for the usefulness of logic which extends to every discipline.<sup>41</sup> All of them have the same tenor: Logic is the very foundation upon which all human knowledge rests. And knowledge is the necessary stepping stone to eternal bliss.<sup>42</sup>

The constant restatement of the fundamental importance of logic was in large part apologetic. Many other Muslims, who were not logicians themselves, among them the majority of the representatives of a simplistic religiosity and piety who grew steadily more numerous over the centuries, held a very different view of the position of logic in human civilization. Not infrequently, the occupation with it had thus to be a clandestine affair. Its intricacies were ridiculed by those unable and unwilling to master them. They were condemned as a mere juggling of words and meaningless gibberish. More ominous, they were "embodying unbelief and aiding heresy."<sup>43</sup> Logic was un-Islamic and therefore no doubt forbidden by the religious law.<sup>44</sup> Its affinity to heresy—"he who does logic courts heresy" (*man tamantaqa tazandaqa*)<sup>45</sup>—is the favorite theme of Ibn Taymîyah's attacks on logic. His reference to a statement echoing or anticipating the proverb just quoted

<sup>40</sup> Cf. al-Fārābî, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulûm*, ed. 'Uthmân M. Amin, 11 ff. (Cairo 1350/1931).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Taqrîb*, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Maqâsid*, I, 6 f.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Taqrîb*, 6 f.

<sup>44</sup> As-Subkî, *Fatâwî*, II, 644 f. (cf. Rosenthal, *Fortleben*, 116), criticizes this attitude.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. I. Goldziher, *Stellung der alten islamischen Orthodoxie*, 24. Goldziher points out the much greater ambivalence in the attitude of Muslim theologians toward logic as compared to their attitude toward the other ancient sciences.

and attributed to Abû Yûsuf (d. 182/798), "He who seeks knowledge by means of speculative theology (*kalâm*) courts heresy,"<sup>46</sup> makes it clear that his attitude toward logic is that of the firm believer in the supremacy of revealed religion as the source of all true knowledge. He asserts emphatically that far from being an individual duty, the cultivation of logic could not even be considered a community duty to be discharged by some members of the community at all times.<sup>47</sup> No scholar in any scholarly discipline or science whatever has accomplished much through logic.<sup>48</sup> In short, logic, like all the other Greek sciences, had come into the world through the machinations of Satan, and it was one of the means by which the true faith of pious believers could be undermined and Islam, perhaps, eventually be destroyed. These attacks upon logic were at times effective in discouraging the study of and the writing on logic but only to a certain degree. They started out early in Muslim history, certainly as early as the ninth century, but by then, logic had already deeply penetrated into the inner recesses of Muslim civilization. Hostility did not succeed in dislodging it from its entrenched position, and the criticism directed against it even by champions of the sharp word and the bitter invective such as Ibn Taymîyah had to acknowledge, grudgingly to be sure, its inescapable virtues. If the study of logic seems often to have stagnated and to have moved along well-trodden paths, this was due more to the scholastic character of the discipline than to attacks from outside. On the contrary, those attacks stiffened the attitude of the proponents of logic whose claims for it as the necessary helpmaid of theology grew consistently bolder. The enemies of logic believed that there were other means to achieve true knowledge, and they denied the claim of logic that it alone held the key to it. Yet, their entire thinking was dominated by logical categories and operated within the forms developed by them. Above all, they, no less than the logicians whom they attacked, were concerned with the problem of human knowledge. For them, too, it was the central problem not only of human but also of divine existence. As far as "knowledge" was concerned, there was little difference between friend and foe.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyûn*, II, 141; Ibn Taymîyah, *Naqd al-mantiq*, 54.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Ibn Taymîyah, *Naqd al-mantiq*, I, 155.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Ibn Taymîyah, *Naqd al-mantiq*, 169 f.

Logic in Islam was, of course, Aristotelian logic.<sup>49</sup> It is safe to say that it never broke through the basic configurations of its origin. The Aristotelian "Organon" does not bother with a formal definition of "knowledge." The result was that numerous as such definitions became in Muslim literature, they were not at home in works of logic as such, even if some of these works occasionally considered definitions of knowledge. The quest of what knowledge was assumed major significance in the religious realm, because much of the methodological approach to Muslim theology and law came to depend upon the answer to it. These fields therefore provided the home for definitions of knowledge carefully elaborated and placed in conspicuous positions.<sup>50</sup> Even there, however, such definitions were thought dispensable when a brief summary was intended. Thus, aṣ-Ṣābūnī devoted some space to definitions of knowledge in his fair-sized *Kifāyah* on speculative theology, but these definitions were omitted by him, it seems as a matter of course, in his short basic treatise on the subject, the *Bidāyah* (on which the *Kifāyah* is a commentary).<sup>51</sup> By and large, Muslim works on logic convey the impression that their subject is the nature of knowledge more directly and forcefully than the logical works of the Stagirite themselves. In the Greek text of the "Organon" and much of the later Greek logical literature, a comparatively subdued use was made of the word "knowledge." It was taken for granted that the student knew what was involved in the difficult technical discussion of epistemology. In Muslim logical writing, on the other hand, it would seem to be the rare treatise long or short that does not start out with a reference to the various kinds of knowledge into which it was assumed knowledge could and had to be divided, with a declaration that knowledge consists of two parts and is either perception or apperception (*taṣawwur / taṣdīq*), accompanied by a constantly modified evaluation of the possible meaning of these two crucial terms; with a discussion of the difference between the changeable knowledge of particulars and the permanent unchangeable knowledge of universals; or with a survey of the various ways and means by which human beings are

<sup>49</sup> Remnants of Stoic logic, no longer recognized as such by Muslim scholars, have been isolated by modern scholars, cf. F. Jadaane, *L'influence du stoïcisme sur le pensée musulmane*, 99 ff. (Beirut 1968).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Chapter IV, above.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. above, p. 48, n. 3. The Istanbul Ms. Laleli 2271 contains the *Kifāyah* and the *Bidāyah* on fols. 1–92a and 108a–132b, respectively.

believed to be able to attain knowledge. The student, always assumed to be in need of elementary instruction, is never permitted to forget that the logician is concerned with only one thing, knowledge and how it can be acquired and its true character recognized and defended. It is in a way his best justification, since the word “knowledge” called for at least an initial attitude of respect wherever it was uttered.

The history of logical studies in Islam remains to be written. The preserved works are numerous. The production of logical treatises appears actually to increase in later centuries and, in particular, in the great expanse of Muslim territory located to the east of the Arab countries. These works increased in subtlety and technical refinement, the more speculative theology reacted upon them and the more inevitable it became to think of divine knowledge simultaneously with broaching any aspect whatever of human logic.<sup>52</sup> How intricate matters did in fact become can easily be gauged by the summary of the various ideas advanced by religious logicians on the manner in which logic came to grips with the problem of knowledge, prepared in eighteenth-century India by at-Tahānawī in connection with the article on *ilm* in his great dictionary of technical terms. Unfortunately, most of the literature on logic remains unpublished and unstudied.<sup>53</sup> The historical outlines can be dimly perceived, but they remain so broad as to be virtually meaningless. Major as well as minor details, which alone can give validity and value to a history of logic in Islam, have not yet been collected and classified in any meaningful way. It is clear, however, that regardless of changes in approach and method, Muslim logicians never lost sight of the fact that the primary function of their labors was to find out about “knowledge” and to contribute to a comprehensive epistemology for all aspects of Muslim intellectual endeavor, including theology and jurisprudence.

### 3. EPISTEMOLOGY AS A TOOL OF THEOLOGY AND JURISPRUDENCE

The development of Muslim dogmatics “can be characterized as that of a growing intellectualism...Muhammad is overshadowed

<sup>52</sup> Examples are found, for instance, in Ibn Ḥazm’s *Taqrīb*. Ibn Ḥazm at times inserts seemingly uncalled-for discussions of theology, as when he enlarges the discussion of *ghayr*, *mithl*, and *khilāf* by a statement on God’s complete difference, cf. *Taqrīb*, 70.

<sup>53</sup> A usable bibliography of Arabic works on logic has been published by N. Rescher (above, p. 46, n. 1).



by Aristotle.”<sup>54</sup> These words of A. J. Wensinck are unexceptionable (at least if one disregards Ismâ‘îlî-Shî‘ah theory which strikes out more independently and gathers up a greater variety of philosophical and religious elements). They may be expanded. They need not be changed or be improved. In the few pages devoted by Wensinck to flesh them out, the principal evidence has been assembled. Little can be added to it, although the number of authors and works, most of them unpublished, is very large and presently not fully amenable to scholarly control. The task that remains to be done here is a description of some of the stages of this development—mentioning not all of the works known and referred to elsewhere in this book but restricting ourselves to the more conspicuous ones—, from the point of view of the importance placed upon the concept of knowledge as the starting point of theological insight. It could well be said with the Mu‘tazilah Abû l-Qâsim al-Ka‘bî al-Balkhî (d. 319/931), speaking of al-Junayd, that in Islam the speculative theologians were wedded to “knowledge” as were the government secretaries to the mastery of proper linguistic usage and the philosophers to the discussion of subtle ideas.<sup>55</sup> About five and a half centuries later, the relationship between logic and theology was simply formulated by al-Kâfiyâjî (d. 879/1474) in commenting as follows on the opening words of at-Taftâzânî’s *Tahdhîb fi l-mantiq wa-l-kalâm*: “Scholars customarily treat first of matters connected with logic and then of matters connected with speculative theology, because the former is an instrument for mastering the latter.”<sup>56</sup>

The origins are clearly recognizable. Epistemology was acknowledged by eighth-century Oriental Christianity within the Muslim Empire to be the necessary foundation of theology. The best evidence available to us is again the famous *Pégê gnôseôs* “Fount of Knowledge” of John of Damascus. The work consists of three books, of which the first provides the philosophical underpinning, while the second and third deal with, respectively, sects and the orthodox faith. The title properly belongs only to the first book,

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 248. For a detailed bibliography of *‘aqîdahs*, cf. the introduction of H. Laoust, *La Profession de Foi d’Ibn Baṭṭa* (Damascus 1958).

<sup>55</sup> Cf. as-Subkî, *Ṭabaqât ash-Shâfi‘yah*, II, 28.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. al-Kâfiyâjî (above, p. 61, n. 4), quoted here following the Istanbul Ms. Laleli 2592 and the Bursa Ms. Haraççı 1378, with the full title, *at-Targhîb fi kashf rumûz at-Tahdhîb*.

but it has been extended to designate the entire work, and no better comprehensive title is known.<sup>57</sup> John of Damascus was not interested in educational method as were the almost contemporary *ḥadīth* scholars of Islam. Nor did he intend to introduce “knowledge” as a synonym of religion, although in his view, the teaching of religion was the teaching of true knowledge and the elimination of false knowledge. The problem with which he was concerned was epistemological. He recognized that an understanding of the meaning of knowledge was essential to any attempt to clarify the true character of religion and faith, and this was what he set out to do.<sup>58</sup> The identical spirit manifested itself in Muslim speculative theology, and it would be far-fetched indeed to deny that the older cultural tradition here influenced the developing new religion through channels not quite tangible to us but none the less real.

It can be assumed that the more solid acquaintance with Greek logic which came through the translations gave Muslim theologians the opportunity to essay literary formulations of the idea of epistemology as the basis of theology. In all likelihood, they were not slow in adopting the procedure of providing their writings with epistemological introductions. This may have happened already in the later years of the eighth century or in the early ninth century. Since the early treatises are lost or not yet known, it is not possible for us to say who might have been the first Muslim authors to start the process that was completed during the tenth century. It has been stated, and seemingly with good reason as far as our present knowledge goes, that the *Kutāb at-Taʾwḥīd* by al-Māturīdī (d. 333/994–45) is the oldest treatise, on Muḥammadan

<sup>57</sup> Cf. B. Kotter, *Die Überlieferung der Pege Gnoseos*, 1 (Ettal 1959, *Studia Patristica et Byzantina* 5).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. also the Syriac Christian work by Joseph Ḥazzâyâ, entitled *Rêshê dāda'îā*, which has been erroneously placed into the seventh century but which apparently dates from the eighth century. It appears to have been a minor compilation dealing with edifying sayings and certain theological questions and to have been written somehow in the tradition of and in connection with the work of Evagrius Ponticus. It may have been in a way a forerunner of both the traditionist and the speculative theological occupation with knowledge among Muslims, although its concern with knowledge may have been restricted to its title. Cf. A. Scher, in *RSO*, 111 (1910), 45–63, in particular, 50–54; Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, 222 f.; A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts, I: Syriac and Garshūni Manuscripts*, no. 601 (Cambridge 1933); Guillaumont (above, p. 25, n. 1).

theology that begins with an exposition of the theory of knowledge.<sup>59</sup>

An earlier stage, however, can easily be deduced from the exposition of Mu'tazilah theology which we find in the *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsah* of Judge 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, who died about ninety years old, in 415/1025. According to 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, the first duty of the responsible Muslim, and a necessary duty at that,<sup>60</sup> is rational speculation, which leads to the knowledge of God.<sup>61</sup> As becomes clear from repeated references, the existence of the five basic principles of Mu'tazilah dogmatics forms the subject, in each case, of a particular knowledge (*ilm*). There are various kinds of rational speculation which require explanation.<sup>62</sup> Only then is "knowledge" (*ma'rifah*) defined. *Ilm*, as well as *dirâyah*, are equivalents (*naẓâ'ir*) of *ma'rifah*, meaning "that which brings with it satisfaction and restful assuredness" (*mâ yaqtadî sukûn an-nafs wa-thalaj aṣ-ṣadr wa-ṭum'anînat al-qalb*), or rather, according to 'Abd-al-Jabbâr's definition from his *Kitâb al-'Umad*, *ilm* is "the belief that satisfies the soul that its object (*mu'taqad*) is as one believes it to be."<sup>63</sup> "Knowledge" (*ilm*) is identical with "belief" (*i'tiqâd*), although this was denied by Abû l-Hudhayl al-'Allâf who assumed that knowledge was a genus (*jîns*) by itself. However, it does not include belief based upon a blind adherence to tradition or haphazard guessing. It is a belief that satisfies (*sukûn an-nafs*) the believer.<sup>64</sup> The necessity of rational speculation is indicated by the belief that God is not known either of necessity or through observation by the senses,<sup>65</sup> nor is continuous information based on the reports of numerous reliable authorities a source of the knowledge of God.<sup>66</sup> The way to know something, unless it is known of necessity, is through argument and proof (*dalîl, dalâlah*). This includes the Qur'ân, the *sunnah*, and the general consensus (*ijmâ'*). But for attaining the knowledge of God, reasoning is

<sup>59</sup> Cf. J. Schacht, in *Studia Islamica*, I (1953), 41. For the text, cf. Yörükan (above, p. 103, n. 4).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsah*, 68 ff.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, 39.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, 45.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, 45 f., see above, p. 63.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, 188 ff. Abû l-Hudhayl, of course, considered knowledge in general to be belief, as stated by Abû 'Alî al-Jubbâ'î in his *Masâ'il al-khilâf 'alâ Abî l-Hudhayl*, cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, *Mughnî*, XII, 25.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, 48 ff.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, 53.

required (*hujjat al-ʿaql*).<sup>67</sup> Since ʿAbd-al-Jabbâr was not interested in knowledge as such, he did not have to concern himself expressly with those aspects of the theory of knowledge that deal with sense perception and its role in the acquisition of knowledge. His work represents a late stage of Muʿtazilism. However, its treatment of knowledge as an introduction to the dogmatic exposition gives the definite expression of reflecting a stage prior to the work of al-Mâturîdî and the Ashʿarites. Thus, the need for rational speculation is stressed before the definition of knowledge is presented (as was done later still in the work of the Imâm al-Haramayn). “Knowledge” is not yet emancipated from its specific meaning of man’s knowledge of God, and *maʿrifah* as against *ʿilm* is the preferred term, which appears to be the older way of referring to dogmatic theology. All this would seem to confirm the assumption that ʿAbd-al-Jabbâr has preserved the original approach to the subject as practiced by the ninth-century Muʿtazilah and, presumably, expounded by them in their writings.<sup>68</sup>

ʿAbd-al-Jabbâr’s *Mughnî*, in its twelfth part devoted to speculation and knowledge, tells the same story in even greater detail. Throughout the *Mughnî*, “knowledge” plays a conspicuous and often fundamental role in the argumentation of whatever problem is under discussion. Whether the *Mughnî*’s concern with the significance of traditional information (*akhbâr*) as a source of knowledge (cr., especially, *Mughnî*, XV, 342 ff.) was shared by the earlier Muʿtazilah literature seems, however, somewhat uncertain in the absence of direct evidence.

Another indication of an early date for the combination of epistemology and theology among Muslim writers is to be found in the noteworthy fact that in Jewish circles, Qaraite as well as orthodox, this combination appears in theological writings as early as the time of al-Mâturîdî. Saʿadyâh (882–942) completed his famous “Book of Beliefs and Opinions” (*Kitâb al-Amânât wa-l-iʿtiqâdât*) in the year 933. The work contains a detailed discussion of Jewish theology on an intellectual level equal to that of contemporary Islam. As a scholar and theologian, Saʿadyâh shows himself fully aware of the importance of secular learning as well as very conscious of the necessary character of the basic

<sup>67</sup> Cf. ʿAbd-al-Jabbâr, 88.

<sup>68</sup> For Muʿtazilah monographs on *maʿrifah*, cf. above, pp. 148 f.

material and spiritual/religious human urges.<sup>69</sup> The introductory remarks of his work lay the foundation for what is to follow by discussing the problem of doubt and the means for attaining knowledge. For Sa'adyâh, the scientific study of theology is commanded by Scripture and shunned by unbelievers and heretics. The existence of doubt is not due to a fault in divine planning. It is inherent in the fact of createdness. Perfect knowledge without any uncertainties would make man identical with God. The fact of their createdness makes it obligatory for human beings to perform all their actions step by step and within a given time span. This includes the activity of knowing. It requires a gradual progression from obscurity and confusion to greater clarity and a more assured insight. There are three sources of certain knowledge (*yaqîn, haqq*), namely, sense perception and observation (*ʿilm ash-shâhid*), the intuition of reason (*ʿilm al-ʿaql*), and knowledge derived from logical necessity (*ʿilm mâ dafaʿat ad-darûrah ilayh*). Sense perception is the fundamental source upon which the other two must draw. We Jews, Sa'adyâh says, admit of a fourth source of knowledge, that is, sound traditional information (*al-khabar as-şâdiq*) based upon knowledge derived from both sense perception and reason. This, of course, is something not unknown also to Muslim theologians, even if the rationalists among them whom Sa'adyâh has in mind played it down, but in this respect, the Jewish theologian must naturally differ from his Muslim colleagues as to where authoritative tradition has to be sought. Sa'adyâh admits that various groups have rejected one or more of the three philosophical sources of knowledge. This has been a mistake on their part. There are factors that may vitiate each one of the three, but once the nature of such factors is known, they can be avoided. Since the necessary knowledge, the third of the three mentioned sources of certainty, is specially important with regard to matters metaphysical, the five factors that may vitiate its correctness require particular attention. Knowledge systematized in particular disciplines is often needed in order to place data

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Sa'adyâh's chapter on philosophy (*hikmah*), 309 ff. of S. Landauer's edition (Leiden 1880), trans. Rosenblatt, 393 f. The epistemological introduction covers pp. 1–30 of Landauer's edition and pp. 4–37 of Rosenblatt's translation. Cf. also A. Heschel, *The Quest for Certainty in Saadia's Philosophy* (New York 1944, reprinted from *Jewish Quarterly Review*, N.S., XXXIII–XXXIV [1942–43]); G. Vajda, *Autour de la théorie de la connaissance chez Saadia*, in *Revue des Etudes Juives*, CXXVI (1967), 135–89, 375–97.

gained from sense perception upon a firmly established and convincing footing.

For the epistemological introduction to theology among Qaraites contemporary with Sa'adyâh, al-Qirqisânî offers an example in his *Kitâb al-Anwâr wa-l-marâqib*. Al-Qirqisânî has an introductory chapter dealing in a summary fashion with the sects known to him, but then he enters into a discussion of the possible ways of gaining knowledge. Regrettably, the text of the relevant chapters happens to be lost, and we know about their existence only through the table of contents indicating the chapter headings.<sup>70</sup> However, it is certain that Jewish theology at the beginning of the tenth century at the latest was fully conscious of the fundamental importance of epistemology, and this would argue for an earlier date among Muslims.

Among Muslim authors, the *Kitâb al-Yâqût* by Abû Ishâq an-Nawbakhtî may be considered further evidence for the pre-Mâtûrîdian combination in scholarly literature of epistemology and dogmatics. Ibn Nawbakht's lifetime is not known for certain, but he may have flourished not later than the first half of the tenth century. The original work is not preserved. It seems, however, that it can be reconstructed with reasonable certainty from the much later commentary written by the 'Allâmah al-Hillî, entitled *Anwâr al-malakût fî sharḥ al-Yâqût*.<sup>71</sup> Here again, the meaning and necessary character of rational speculation are discussed, as are its role in securing 'ilm and the role of traditional evidence (*ad-dalîl as-sam'î*) in connection with the achievement of certain knowledge (*yaqîn*). "Then, the author gives his definition of 'ilm,<sup>72</sup> and the various aspects of 'ilm and its relationship to rational speculation are mentioned. All this precedes the treatment of the basic physical facts and the discussion of theological and dogmatic data, which includes a clarification of the concept of God's knowledge as well as the character of human knowledge. There remains some doubt as to whether the arrangement of the topics in the original work, which was evidently quite brief, was the same as the one we find in the 'Allâmah's commentary. However, unless evidence to the contrary should be forthcoming, we may assume that this was indeed the case. Thus, in the *Kitâb al-Yâqût*, we find

<sup>70</sup> Cf. al-Qirqisânî, *Anwâr*, 64 ff.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. above, p. 49, n. 3; *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 320.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. definition B-2, above, p. 53.

a Twelver-Shī'ah view of the situation that in its significant outlines is not different from the "orthodox" view as it developed and entered the theological literature in the course of the ninth century.

The *Kitāb al-Bad' wa-t-ta'rīkh*, which was written in 355/966, also contains an epistemological introduction discussing rational speculation and *ilm* and the various ways of attaining knowledge before discussing basic data of Muslim theology.<sup>73</sup> The remarkable thing is that this appears here, rather uniquely, within the framework of a historical study and is presented as a necessary preliminary for the understanding of the history of the world. Very likely, this combination of history and philosophical theology was the author's own original idea. It is, perhaps, possible that the philosophical theology presented by him was something very modern and new when he hit upon utilizing it for gaining a deeper insight than existed before into the historical process. However, it would seem much more likely that the *Kitāb al-Bad'* followed the well-established scheme of considerably earlier theological works and can be adduced as evidence for the existence of the epistemological introduction to dogmatics at a date much before its time and that of al-Māturīdī.

The brief creed attributed to al-Māturīdī also starts with a simple remark on the three sources of knowledge, sound (sense) perception, right intelligence, and traditional information derived from trusted authorities. It also refers to the false assumptions of the "Sophists" who point to the alleged shortcomings of these sources of knowledge and maintain that knowledge is not possible.<sup>74</sup>

The lasting formulation of the theory of knowledge as an introduction to theology was developed in Ash'arite circles. Al-Ash'arī himself, it was claimed by A. J. Wensinck,<sup>75</sup> does not appear to have suggested, let alone worked out, an epistemological foundation for his theological creed. His *Ibānah*, where we would be inclined to look for one, does not have an introduction dealing with the theory of knowledge.<sup>76</sup> However, al-Ash'arī wrote many works where such an introduction would have been appropriate and

<sup>73</sup> Cf. above, p. 117, n. 1. For the work as history, cf. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 113 f., 200.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Williams, *Islam*, 180 f. For al-Māturīdī's *Kitāb at-Tawhīd*, of which J. Schacht has prepared an edition, cf. M. Allard, *Le Problème des attributs divins dans la doctrine d'al-Aṣ'arī*, 421 ff. (Beirut 1965) Cf. below, p. 302.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 249.

<sup>76</sup> For the literary questions associated with the *Ibānah*, cf. Allard, *Problème*.

might very well have existed, and he may not have wished to repeat himself in several places. In fact, we are told by Ibn 'Asâkir that his "*Fuṣūl* on the Refutation of Heretics, etc.," contained an introductory chapter devoted to the subject of rational speculation (*naẓar*) which might very well have included al-Ash'arī's views on epistemology.<sup>77</sup> Official Ash'arite epistemology makes its full-blown appearance for us in the *Kitāb at-Tamhīd* by al-Bâqillânī (d. 403/1013).<sup>78</sup> How much of al-Bâqillânī's exposition is his own and how much he owed to his colleagues and predecessors, remains an open question at this stage of our knowledge. The author starts out with the definition of knowledge as "the cognition of the object known as it is," explaining that the term "object known" is required instead of the term "thing," because object known includes also the non-existent and may thus be either a thing or not a thing.<sup>79</sup> He recognizes the non-existent next to the existent as one of the two divisions of the objects of knowledge. There are two kinds of knowledge, just as there are two kinds of objects known. There is the primeval (uncreated, *qadīm*) knowledge of God, and the created (*muhdath*) knowledge of all living beings, humans, angels, jinn, and others. The latter knowledge is again subdivided twofold, into necessary (*darūrī*) knowledge and speculative, deductive (*naẓar, istidlāl*) knowledge.<sup>80</sup> Necessary knowledge, which is also needed knowledge, is a knowledge which adheres

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Ibn 'Asâkir, *Tabayn kadhib al-muftarī*, 128 f. (Damascus 1347). The passage was cited already, before the publication of the text, by W. Spitta, *Ŷur Geschichte, Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'arī*, 68 (Leipzig 1876), and it was cited again by R. J. McCarthy, *The Theology of al-Ash'arī*, 211 f. (Beirut 1953). The contents of al-Ash'arī's *Kitāb al-Ma'ârif* cannot be easily surmised. The suggestion of McCarthy, 222, that it deals with epistemology remains uncertain.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. al-Bâqillânī. *Tamhīd*, 6–14 (on knowledge and deduction), 15–21 (on the objects of knowledge). In the edition of M. 'Abd-al-Hādī Abū Ridāh and Maḥmūd M. al-Khuḍayrī, 34–44 (Cairo 1366/1947).

Al-Bâqillânī divides the existent into two subdivisions. It may be primeval (uncreated, *qadīm*) or created. The latter is to be divided into composite bodies, isolated substances, and accidents. The non-existent admits of five categories. It may be 1. impossible or absurd, 2. possible but never actualized, 3. possible and existent in the future, 4. having existed in the past, and 5. possible in the sense that it may or may not be, while it is not known whether it will be or will not be.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. definitions B-2 and B-3, above, pp. 53 f.

<sup>80</sup> For the relationship of God's knowledge, which is not gone into further in this place by al-Bâqillânī as he discusses it later (*Tamhīd*, 197 ff.), and the two kinds of created knowledge, cf. above, p. 128.



so firmly to the soul of created beings that they cannot escape or doubt it in any way. Speculative knowledge is a knowledge that follows upon deduction and reflection. It is “acquired” (*kasbī*), that is, it is existing in the knower through a created potency. It rests upon necessary knowledge and sense perception. The necessary knowledge of the object known is attained by the perception of the five senses which provide necessary knowledge free from doubt, and it may be created originally (*ibtidāʿ<sup>am</sup>*) in the soul. This includes psychological data and the like. It also includes knowledge derived from continuous reports of numerous informants (*tawâtur*), such as geographical information about remote countries, information about the prophets of old, and other historical knowledge. It may, or may not, be confirmed by sense perception. Knowledge based on these factors may be extended in numerous ways by logical deduction (*istidlāl*), which may also be applied to traditional (*samʿī*) sources of information. It requires an understanding of the meaning of what constitutes logical proof (*dalīl*).<sup>81</sup>

An extensive summary of the corresponding views expressed by ʿAbd-al-Qâhir b. Tâhir al-Baghdâdî (d. 429/1037–38) can be found in Wensinck’s work.<sup>82</sup> A brief exposition of the epistemological foundation was given by the Imâm al-Ḥaramayn as a preface to his *Irshâd*. The Imâm al-Ḥaramayn also expressed himself at greater length on the problems of rational speculation in his *Shâmil fî uṣûl ad-dîn*.<sup>83</sup> His basic contention in the *Irshâd* is that rational speculation is the prime source of knowledge. Some of the ancients, he says, held the opinion that all knowledge is derived from sense perception, and they denied that rational speculation could lead to knowledge. He refutes this view. He maintains that *naẓar* contrasts with the knowledge of the object speculated about as well as with the ignorance of it or doubt concerning it, but it leads to knowledge either sound or unsound, depending on whether it itself is sound or unsound. It guarantees or implies (*d-m-n* V) the attainment of knowledge but does not, as was the Muʿtazilah

<sup>81</sup> For a concise formulation of this theory of knowledge, “the causes (*asbâb*) of knowledge,” one may compare the translation of the introduction of the *Creed* of an-Nasafî (d. 537/1142), which became highly influential, and its commentary by at-Taftâzânî, written in 768/1366–67, by E. E. Elder, 5–27 (above, p. 59, n. 5).

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 255 ff.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Imâm al-Ḥaramayn, *Irshâd*, 3–16, and *Shâmil*, ed. H. Klopfer (Cairo and Wiesbaden 1960–61).

view, generate it. The attainment of knowledge not known before by means of sound speculation is by way of compelling evidence (*adillah*), with the argument being based either upon reason or upon tradition. For the Mu'tazilah, rational speculation is necessitated by reason, whereas for the Imâm al-Ḥaramayn, it is necessitated by the religious law (*shar'*). After having explained how knowledge is attained, the author proceeds to define knowledge, expressing himself in favor of the same definition as al-Bâqillânî but adding, as became henceforth the custom of speculative theologians, a discussion of a number of definitions by both Ash'arites and Mu'tazilah, which he feels compelled to reject. Again, knowledge is divided into the primeval knowledge of God and the newly arising (*ḥādith*, as against al-Bâqillânî's *muḥdath* "created in time") knowledge of man. The latter is to be subdivided into necessary (*darûrî*), intuitive (*badîhî*), and acquired (*kasbî*) knowledge. The former two may be used interchangeably. All knowledge may be called speculative-acquired (*kasbî nazârî*). Knowledge possesses its opposites in concepts such as ignorance (*jahl*), doubt (*shakk*), or guesswork (*ẓann*). Reason (*'aql*) involves all the necessary knowledge there is.

In the next, eleventh century, we meet again with the most articulate spokesman for the need of combining another kind of theology, that of mysticism, with logic, the excessively intellectual, tragic figure of as-Suhrawardî *al-maqtûl*. The ordinary philosophical vision of all knowledge into logic, physics, and metaphysics was put by him into the service of his particular brand of theology. Half of his *Hikmat al-ishrâq*<sup>84</sup> is devoted to the discussion of certain points of Aristotelian logic and physics. This discussion is brief but highly useful, as-Suhrawardî claims. It is not presented as an end in itself, nor is it destined for those who are concerned merely with objective scientific research. It is meant for those who are already on their way toward metaphysical illumination. Epistemology is pressed here into the service of mysticism, not for any compelling need to do so, but by then, the tradition of using epistemology as an introduction to systematic theology had become so strong that no system-builder, in particular one who was also indebted to philosophy for his theological system, could ignore it. Following the trend that secured for *ilm* a position in mysticism equaling

<sup>84</sup> Cf. above, pp. 160 and 185.

or surpassing that of *ma'rifah*, Şadr-ad-dîn al-Qônawî attempted to underpin the mystic interpretation of the Qur'ân with logical terms and concepts, as shown by his lengthy commentary on the first *sûrah*. "Knowledge," which for al-Qônawî is never very far from Şûfî gnosis, is "an abstract universal reality," or "a single universal reality." In contrast to rational knowledge, no perception-and-apperception (*taşawwur/taşdıq*) is involved in the visionary knowledge of the mystic, as believed by the great mass, but only perception. The Qur'ân is "the form of the knowledge that comprises the variety of possible conditions affecting existing things," or it is the form of the divine attribute of knowledge.<sup>85</sup> Another aspect of Muslim theology was thus invaded by logic in a rather intuitive, unsystematic manner which, however, further shows the desire to divert the powerful current of thought centering around "knowledge" into special channels.

With Sayf-ad-dîn al-Âmidî (551–631/1156–1233), a brilliant Syrian scholar greatly admired by those who knew the incisiveness of his mind and his impressive personality, the development reached what might be called its saturation stage. The material at al-Âmidî's disposal which he had to consider in the name of scholarship and which required preservation and evaluation had become massive enough to fill many pages of long and involved discussion, even if, as was the intention of al-Âmidî, an author tried to make his work neither too long nor too short. The problems had been looked at from all possible angles. However, the ingenuity of a scholar of al-Âmidî's caliber would hardly have been satisfied with merely repeating what had been said before. He would insist upon his own, and to some degree novel, conclusions. The basic assumptions were no longer questioned, and the circle within which even the most acute mind was forced to move had become narrow and was completely circumscribed by the need to prove the unprovable. For al-Âmidî, the end and goal of human existence was perfection. Perfection was identical for him with a comprehensive knowledge of the *intelligibilia* and of objects unknown. By his time, Muslim civilization had become fully conscious of the tremendous burden of knowledge with which it had been saddled and which could be dropped only at the risk of its very existence; therefore, this accumulated knowledge required constant study and

<sup>85</sup> Cf. al-Qônawî, *Ijâz al-bayân*, 48, 54, 57, 219. Cf. also above, pp. 163 and 166.

scholarly attention. Time and human life are too brief to master all the sciences and things worth knowing (*al-ʿulûm wa-l-maʿârif*). As these matters differ in importance, preference must be accorded to the most important and useful knowledge, that is, "speculative theology (*ʿilm al-kalâm*) which investigates the essence, attributes, and connected circumstances of the Necessarily Existent One." Al-Âmidî's principal work on the subject, entitled *Abkâr al-afkâr*, shows the systematic arrangement and the predilection for classification which is so greatly characteristic of the ultimate stage of Aristotelian influence. A mere reading of the table of contents is now often sufficient to tell the reader what to expect.

Of the eight chapters (*qâ'idah*) of the *Abkâr*, the first four which constitute almost three-fourths of the entire work are devoted to questions considered to be related to epistemology. They deal with 1. knowledge and its subdivisions, 2. rational speculation and its subdivisions, 3. the methods which lead to the objects sought through rational speculation, and 4. the division of the objects of knowledge into existent, non-existent, and neither existent nor non-existent. The fourth chapter, which takes up over nine times the space of the preceding three chapters, is to a large extent devoted to a discussion of God's being, actions, and attributes. Epistemological problems are also dealt with later on in the *Abkâr* as, for instance, in the fifth chapter dealing with the problems of prophecy.

The discussion of knowledge and its subdivisions is, in turn, arranged in four sections. The first section discusses the meaning of knowledge and the definitions that have been proposed for determining this meaning. In this context, the opinion of the "Sophists" that there is no way of attaining any knowledge is mentioned as usual, but it is not discussed in detail. The schools, as al-Âmidî saw them, were those of the Mu'tazilah, the Ash'arites (al-Ash'arî, Ibn Fûrak, and, in particular, al-Bâqillânî), the philosophers, and his own "colleagues" (*aṣḥâb*). Over fifteen definitions of knowledge are discussed by him, including the opinions of those who denied the possibility of definition. Al-Âmidî's objections centered principally around tautology, if a definition included, for instance, a reference to cognition or to the object known, and the like. Or they stress lack of comprehensiveness or failure to take due account of the peculiar character of the knowledge of God. His own preferred definition expectedly tries to avoid any such

pitfalls. It discards sense perception as a source of true knowledge and operates with the psychological category of discernment developing into a permanent habit able to decide that something must be so and cannot be different. The following attempt at translating al-Âmidî's discussion of the true nature and definitions of knowledge may stand here for the entire dogged effort of Muslim theology to derive the data of faith from epistemological premises.<sup>86</sup>

"Scholars differ with regard to the notions that are indicative of the true meaning of knowledge.

1. Some<sup>87</sup> Mu'tazilah say that 'knowledge is believing the thing (to be) as it is.'<sup>88</sup> This is not correct in view of the object of belief in connection with the traditional belief (*taqlîd*) in the existence of God. For it<sup>89</sup> is something believed (to be) as it is, and belief in it is not knowledge. This cannot be refuted, even if one adds to the definition, 'to one's own satisfaction.'<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, the definition excludes a knowledge of the non-existent that is impossible of existence. For it is a knowledge (that is, something that can be known), but what belongs to it is not a thing, as is generally agreed.

Some add to the definition, 'when it happens on the basis of necessity or proof.'<sup>91</sup> While this addition removes the first difficulty, it does not remove the second difficulty. Those who think that knowledge does not go with the non-existent that is impossible of existence derive this idea by way of apperceptive knowledge (*ʿilm taṣdîqî*). Yet, apperceptive knowledge calls upon two kinds of perceptive knowledge (*ʿilm taṣawwuri*), and one of the two perceptions is the non-existent that is impossible of existence. Thus, they contradict their own assumption, in addition to slighting<sup>92</sup>

<sup>86</sup> The three manuscripts of al-Âmidî, *Abkâr*, used here (Aya Sofya 2165, fols. 2a–4a; Aya Sofya 2167, fols. 2b–4b; Ahmet III 1774, Vol. 1, fols. 2a–3b), show quite a few discrepancies in their text. Aya Sofya 2167 and Ahmet III 1774, appear usually to go together as against Aya Sofya 2165. For the Aya Sofya manuscripts, see above, p. 47, n. 1. (The date of al-Âmidî's birth as given above may be too early).

<sup>87</sup> In the translation, I have tried to distinguish between the plural "some" and the singular "someone." However, it is not always absolutely certain what al-Âmidî had in mind in each given case. The use of singular forms in the continuation is not decisive. The plural may still be meant.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. definition F-2, above, p. 63.

<sup>89</sup> That is, "the existence," not "God" Himself.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. definition F-3, above, p. 63.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. definition F-4, above, p. 64.

<sup>92</sup> *Mukâbir*<sup>am</sup>: Aya Sofya 2157 *munkir*<sup>am</sup> "denying."

intuitiveness (*badîhah*) and the knowledge, found by every intelligent person himself, of the impossibility of negation and affirmation occurring together, which is not a matter of perception (*ghayr mutaṣawwar*), with negation, moreover, being not knowable (*ghayr ma'lûm*).

2. Judge Abû Bakr (al-Bâqillânî) says that 'knowledge is the cognition of the object known as it is.'<sup>93</sup> This is not correct on two counts. First, God possesses knowledge, and there exists a general consensus to the effect that God's knowledge cannot be called cognition (*ma'rifah*). Thus, the definition is not all inclusive. Secondly, al-Bâqillânî defines knowledge (*ilm*) through the object known (*ma'lûm*). Now, *ma'lûm* is derived from *ilm*, and something derived from something is less obvious than the thing from which it is derived. It is impossible to define the more obvious through the less obvious. Also, the definition contains a superfluous addition, namely, 'as it is.' The cognition of the object known must always be 'as it is.'

3. The Shaykh, al-Ash'arî,<sup>94</sup> uses several notions for the definition knowledge. The first is: 'Knowledge is that which necessitates that he in whom it subsists is knowing.'<sup>95</sup> The second is: 'That which necessitates for him in whom it subsists the name of knower.'<sup>96</sup> And the third is: 'Knowledge is the perception (*idrâk*) of the object known as it is.'<sup>97</sup> The first two notions are adversely affected by the use of *'âlim* ('knowing, knower'), which is less obvious than *ilm*, in connection with the definition of *ilm*. The third notion also adversely affected by the use of the less obvious *ma'lûm* for the definition of *ilm* as well as by the use of *idrâk* in this connection. *Idrâk* is basically a species (*naw'*) of knowledge, and it is impossible to define the genus by its species. Moreover, there is no need to add, 'as it is,' as stated before.

4. Professor Abû Bakr b. Fûrak says that 'knowledge is that through whose existence he in whom it subsists is enabled to act in an orderly fashion and to act well.'<sup>98</sup> This is not correct. If Ibn Fûrak means by it 'that through which acting well and in an orderly

<sup>93</sup> Cf. definition B-2, above, p. 53.

<sup>94</sup> The name is omitted in the manuscripts Aya Sofya 2167 and Ahmet III 1774.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. definition A-7, above, p. 52.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. definition A-6, above, p. 52.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. definition C-1, above, p. 56.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. definition J-1, above, p. 67.

fashion is possible by means of deductive reasoning,' this would be absurd, for acting in an orderly fashion not only depends on knowledge but on power (*qudrah*) as well. And if he means that acting in an orderly fashion depends on it but not exclusively so, as power is also required for it, (power) would be in the same position, and it is not knowledge. Also, one of us may have a knowledge which has no influence upon the orderly execution of any action either subsisting in him or outside of him, since in our basic view he is not the one to bring (actions) into existence. Furthermore, in order to show the incorrectness of the definition, it has been said that there may be a knowledge of that through which acting in an orderly fashion is not possible, as, for instance, one's knowledge of himself, of God, or of the impossible. What belongs to that is neither an action nor something through which acting in an orderly fashion is possible. This argument, meant to prove the incorrectness of Ibn Fûrak's definition, requires the conclusion that (the definition would, in fact, be acceptable), if one were to say: 'Knowledge is that which makes the orderly execution of everything belonging to it possible.' However, if what is meant is that which makes acting in an orderly fashion possible in general, it is not (acceptable).

5. The Shaykh, Abû l-Qâsim al-Isfarâ'inî, says that 'knowledge is that through which one knows.'<sup>99</sup> This, again, means defining knowledge by something less obvious.

6. One of the colleagues says: 'Knowledge is the asseveration of the object known as it is.'<sup>100</sup> This is wrong in three respects. The first is that it defines *ilm* through *ma'lûm*. As stated above, this is wrong. The second is that if knowledge is the asseveration of the object known, the knower of the object known would be the one who asseverates the object known. This then requires the conclusion that our knowledge of the existence of the Lord is identical with asseverating it. This is absurd. The third is that *ithbât* (translated here 'asseveration') may be used in the meaning of 'bringing something into existence' or in the meaning of 'causing something to rest after motion,' or it may be used metaphorically for knowledge. Obviously, *ithbât* is meant to be understood here in the first sense. The second usage is impossible in our context. And the third usage would involve the defining of knowledge through knowledge, which is impossible.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. definition A-1, above, p. 52.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. definition D-3, above, p. 58.

7. Another colleague says that ‘knowledge is the clear understanding (*tabayyun*) of the object known as it is.’<sup>101</sup> The (superfluous) addition this definition includes is obvious, as is the fact that it defines *ilm* through something less obvious. Its particular (deficiency) is that *tabayyun* indicates appearance after concealment, clarity after obscurity. This makes it necessary to exclude the Lord’s knowledge from the definition.

8. Someone else says that ‘knowledge is the trust (*thiqah*) that the object known is as it is.’<sup>102</sup> The (superfluous) addition this definition includes is obvious, as is the fact that it defines *ilm* through something less obvious. Moreover, knowledge as the trust with regard to the object known requires the conclusion that he in whom knowledge subsists be trusting. This would make it necessary for the Creator to be trusting with regard to what He is knowing. The employment of such a term for God is impossible according to the religious law.

9. The philosophers say that ‘knowledge stands for the fact that the form of the object known has impressed itself upon the soul.’<sup>103</sup> The consequence would be that the form of heat and of cold is impressed upon the soul of a person who knows heat and cold. This requires the conclusion that he who knows them be hot or cold (just by knowing them). This is absurd. It may be contended that what impresses itself (upon the soul) is but the idea (*mithâl*) of the heat and the cold, and not the heat and the cold themselves. Against this contention, it may be argued that if the idea is equivalent (*musâwî*) in reality to what is represented by it,<sup>104</sup> the difficulty remains applicable. If not, it is not something like (*mithl*) it, and knowledge cannot belong to it.

10. Because it is so difficult to define knowledge, later scholars differ.<sup>105</sup> Some say that there is no way to define knowledge by means of (verbal) definition (*hadd*). It can be defined only through disjunction and example. Others say that the knowledge of knowledge is something intuitive (*badihî*), since anything other than knowledge can be defined only through knowledge. Thus, if something else were to define knowledge, it would be a case of circular

<sup>101</sup> Cf. definition D-1, above, p. 58.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. definition F-1, above, p. 63.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. definition E-5, above, p. 60.

<sup>104</sup> Aya Sofya 4167 has *al-mumaththal*, against *al-mithl* of the other manuscripts.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. above, p. 48.



reasoning (*dawr*). Also, man knows of necessity his own existence. Knowledge is one of the two perceptions (*taṣawwūr*) of this intuitive apprehension. Whatever the intuitive depends upon is itself intuitive. Ergo, the perception of knowledge is intuitive.

Both views are not correct. The first statement is not correct, because, if the mentioned method of defining knowledge serves to attain the cognition (*ma'rifah*) of knowledge and its distinction from other (matters), (it is a legitimate method, since verbal) definition (*ḥadd*) means just that, and nothing else. If it does not serve to distinguish knowledge from other (matters), it does not define knowledge.

The second statement is not cogent. Circular reasoning requires (for its presence) that the process of defining (*taḥdīd*) is not taking place through some matter outside knowledge. This does not make the process of defining absolutely impossible, since definition is more general than definition through some matter outside the thing defined, as is obvious—unless knowledge is something simple, which it is not, since it is a species of the category of quality, according to one view, or of the category of relation, according to another. Thus, it is something compound. Moreover, it is not circular reasoning, since circular reasoning takes place only, if there is dependence upon one and the same aspect (*ma'a itihād jihat at-tawaqquf*). Now, the other-than-knowledge depends upon knowledge not inasmuch as knowledge is an attribute distinguishing it, but inasmuch as it perceives (*mudrik*) it. And knowledge depends upon the other-than-knowledge through the contrary. Consequently, there is no circular reasoning at all.

Even if man's knowledge of his own existence (lit.: the existence of his soul) is intuitive, it does not follow that the various kinds of perceptive knowledge (*al-ʿulūm at-taṣawwūrīyah*) are intuitive because of the existence of the intuitive relation between the two. The only meaning there is to the intuitive proposition (*al-qadīyah al-badīhiyah*) is that, if knowledge of its details is attained, the intellect proceeds to (establish) the relation necessary for them without depending upon rational speculation or deductive reasoning, and no matter whether the details in question are known through intuition or through rational speculation. Thus, the soul is one of the perceptions in the example mentioned (concerning man's knowledge of his own existence, the existence of his soul), and the knowledge of the meaning of the soul is not intuitive.

11. The most likely way of defining knowledge is the statement: 'Knowledge stands for an attribute through which the soul of him who possesses this attribute attains the discernment of some reality not perceivable by the senses in the soul, thus guarding himself against the *sensibilia*, at which he arrives in a way that does not leave open the possibility that it could be different from the manner in which it has arrived.'<sup>106</sup> This includes the knowledge of asseveration and negation and of simple (*mufrad*) and compound. It excludes beliefs and guesses, inasmuch as the possibility that objects of belief or guesswork are present in the soul in a manner different from the manner in which they have arrived in the soul is not excluded with regard to the soul.

It is positive (*wujûdî*), and not negative (*salbî*). If it were negative, its negation would be an asseveration, because a double negation is an asseveration, and if this were the case, it would not be possible to negate the knowledge of the non-existent which is impossible of existence, because this would entail describing pure non-existence in an asseverative manner. This would be absurd.

It may be said that even if this proves that knowledge is asseverative, it conflicts with that which proves that it may be negative. Simple ignorance is contradictory to knowledge, and simple negation is not a negative matter. Otherwise, its negation would be an asseveration, as you have mentioned.<sup>107</sup> If it were an asseveration, it would not be possible to negate ignorance of the non-existent which is impossible of existence, because it would entail establishing a description in an asseverative manner of the pure non-existent. This would be absurd. And if simple ignorance is asseverative, the knowledge contradictory to it is negative. We reply: It requires the assumption that simple ignorance is contradictory to knowledge. This is not so. It is contrary (*muqâbil*) to it. Contraries are more general than contradictory (matters). From the fact that one of two contraries is asseverative, it does not necessarily follow that the other is negative. Thus, they may be found together in what is false (*kadhib*) through (*bi-n-nisbah ilâ*) what does not accept knowledge. If they were contradictory, they could not be found together in what is false.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. definition D-5, above, p. 58.

<sup>107</sup> "You" in the plural, the usual form in *kalâm* discussions where the author wishes to indicate that he is dealing with various schools or with an opponent and the latter's followers.

12. It has been said that 'knowledge is an attribute expressing the relationship between the knower and the object known.'<sup>108</sup> This is debatable. If it is assumed that relationship is non-existence (*'adam*), the negation of relationship must be an asseveration. This requires the conclusion that a negation of a relationship between pure non-existences requires the description of pure non-existence in an asseverative manner. This is absurd. If, on the other hand, it is assumed that relationship is existence (*wujūd*), it follows that relationship between the prior and the posterior can in both cases be described in an asseverative manner, although the one is non-existent. It would also require that relationship through contrariness (*taqābul*) between negation and affirmation (*ījāb*) can in both cases be described in an asseverative manner, whereas negation is pure non-existence. Now, if both assumptions are absurd, knowledge cannot be an attribute expressing a relationship.

If the concept (*ma'nā*) of knowledge can be defined, (knowledge) is truly real (*ḥāsil mutaḥaqqiq*), as intelligent men generally agree. Only the Sophists differ in this respect. They will be discussed later on."

Al-Āmidī goes on to speak about the different kinds of knowledge. For him, they are three in number, as they were for his predecessors. The primeval knowledge of God does not come under consideration at this juncture, since this subject, the author states, will come up again in connection with the divine attributes, which is the normal procedure. The newly arising (*ḥādith*) knowledge consists of two kinds, necessary (*darūrī*) knowledge and acquired (*kasbī, muktasab*) knowledge. In connection with the necessary knowledge, the most important problem is whether or not it can be gained also by means of rational speculation. For the Jahmīyah, he claims, all knowledge is speculative, and no necessity is involved. Such extreme views are naturally not acceptable to al-Āmidī. However, he cannot avoid drawing quite close to them by agreeing to the statement that necessary knowledge does exist but is attained through rational speculation.

The acquired knowledge is closely allied to speculative knowledge. One of the problems here is whether or not there is such knowledge that can be present without rational speculation and deductive reasoning. Of the five definitions of acquired knowledge, the one

<sup>108</sup> Cf. definition A-14, above, p. 53.

acceptable to al-Âmidî is the definition he ascribes to al-Bâqillânî, which is also that of the Imâm al-Ḥaramayn, defining this knowledge as the knowledge that is guaranteed by sound speculation. While agreeing to it, he finds it a bit obscure and proceeds to suggest some modification for greater precision.

The nine subsections of the fourth section of the discussion of knowledge deal with the *ahkâm al-ilm*, that is, the classification of the various aspects of epistemology. Al-Âmidî discusses here once more the attitude to be taken toward the problem of the relationship of necessary knowledge to rational speculation as well as the problem of whether it is permissible to relate a kind of necessary knowledge to another kind of speculative or necessary knowledge. Then, five much debated points as to the relationship of knowledge and object known are elucidated. The eighth subsection refers to the philosophical division of all knowledge into universals and particulars and to the suggested location in the human body of the powers of perception. For the universals, it is the soul. For the particulars, the outward organs are the five senses. The inner powers are also five, all of them located in various parts of the brain. According to al-Âmidî, the more recent philosophers considered the soul the only percipient of both the universals and the particulars, with both the outward and the inner powers of the body being mere instruments for the soul's activity. The ninth subsection, finally, considers the opposites of human knowledge. They are ignorance simple and compound, doubt, conjecture, neglect and forgetfulness, sleep, speculation (*naẓar*, as it implies the absence of knowledge with respect to the object speculated about), and death.<sup>109</sup> Traditional knowledge is not mentioned by al-Âmidî as a source of knowledge. It is clear that he feels strongly that wherever possible, the articles of the Muslim faith can and must be explained rationally without any reference to tradition.

Al-Âmidî's approach won the day, particularly in the eastern part of the Muslim world, in Iran and India, where philosophy in the tradition of Ibn Sînâ and as-Suhrawardî *al-maqtûl* continued to retain its strong appeal. Hardly more than a century after al-Âmidî, the famous Persian theologian, 'Aḡud-ad-dîn al-Îjî (d. 756/1355), compiled a handbook of speculative theology in the

<sup>109</sup> Cf. the list of the Imâm al-Ḥaramayn, above, p. 218. For death as the opposite of knowledge, cf. above, p. 70, n. 2, p. 126, n. 5, and below, p. 321.

tradition of ‘Abd-al-Qâhir al-Baghdâdî and al-Âmidî, his much studied and discussed *Mawâqif* “Stations.”<sup>110</sup> This is a very systematic and, considering the enormous amount of material accumulated by that time, brief work. Everything here is neatly stated, paragraphed, and numbered in what had become the accepted “philosophical” school tradition. The author’s introduction (*khutbah*) comes right out with the customary presuppositions that were no longer questioned. Man is gifted with innate reason (*‘aql gharîzî*), necessary knowledge (*‘ilm darûrî*), and the capability for speculation and deductive reasoning (*nazar, istidlâl*). His chief task is to reflect upon God’s creations, so as to attain knowledge of the existence of an eternal Maker. And again we hear that seeing that scholarly disciplines differ in value, the discipline possessing the greatest value for man deserves most to be studied. This discipline, of course, is speculative theology (*‘ilm al-kalâm*).

The first “station” (*mawqif*) lays the groundwork by discussing the sources of knowledge. Philosophical tradition required al-Ījî to start out by describing the discipline under discussion according to the categories that apply to it as well as any other scholarly discipline. They are definition, object, use, rank, problems, and designation. Then, the opinions on “knowledge as such” are passed in review. Knowledge has been considered necessary, or not necessary and hard to define. Knowledge is attainable through rational speculation. The various definitions attempted in this connection are enumerated and subjected to a searching critique. Then, the divisions of knowledge come under the scrutiny of the author. There are *taṣawwur* and *taṣdîq*, distinguished by the absence or the presence, respectively, of judgment (*hukm*). Newly arising (*hâdith*) knowledge is divided into necessary and acquired (*muktasab*) knowledge. Both *taṣawwur* and *taṣdîq* are in part, necessary through instinct (*wijdân*). The school opinions that every knowledge is necessary, that *taṣawwur* is not acquired, that the belief requiring asseveration of the existence and attributes of the Creator is necessary knowledge, and that every knowledge is derived from rational speculation are discussed.

The goal of speculative theology is the establishment of necessary

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<sup>110</sup> The publication of van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre*, makes the following few remarks on al-Ījî’s work largely superfluous, but I have decided to retain them in view of the importance of the *Mawâqif* as a significant station in the history of theological “knowledge.”

knowledge (pl. *ʿulûm ʿadârîyah*). All kinds of necessary knowledge may be divided into knowledge acquired instinctively (*wijḍânîyât*), which is of little extent and consequence, and knowledge through sense perception (*ḥissîyât*) and through intuition (*badîḥîyât*). With regard to sense perception and intuition as sources of knowledge, there are four different views. The majority recognizes both as sources of knowledge. Then there are those who disparage the role of sense perception, as was done by Plato, Aristotle, Ptolemy, and Galen. There are others who disparage the role of intuition. Some, finally, such as the Sophists and I-do-not-knowers (*lâ-adrîyah*), deny that either, or anything else for that matter, can provide knowledge.

Expectedly, the discussion continues with the discussion of rational speculation as the means to attain the desired goal. Rational speculation is defined and described as either sound or wrong. The former provides knowledge. However, there are dissenters. Thus, the Sumanîyah, of Indian provenience, deny categorically that speculation can lead to knowledge. The “geometricians” (*muhandisîn*) are of the opinion that rational speculation can lead only to scientific mathematical knowledge (*handasîyât*), but not to metaphysical knowledge.<sup>111</sup> In this respect, the most it can achieve is the formulation of guesses and opinions that are relatively speaking more likely. And the “heretics” (*malâḥidah*, referring to the Ismâʿîlî Shīʿah) deny that speculation without a teacher or guide (*muʿallim, imâm*) can lead to the knowledge of God. This is followed by a discussion of the methods by which knowledge can be attained through rational speculation, and of the conditions necessary for the exercise of such speculation. There is general agreement that rational speculation as a means to attain knowledge

<sup>111</sup> The Sumanîyah and the *muhandisîn* are also cited by the ʿAllâmah al-Ḥillî, *Anwâr al-malakût*, 5, who refers to the latter as “a group of the ancients.” They assume allegedly that only observation by the senses can produce knowledge. Cf. also, for instance, al-Ghazzâlî, *Mustasfâ*, I, 85; aṣ-Ṣâbûnî, *Bidâyah*, in the Bursa Ms. Haraççi 1296, fol. 3b; Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî, *Muḥaṣṣal*, who apparently does not mention the Sumanîyah by name, but cf. Ibn Khaldûn, *Lubâb al-Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. P. Luciano Rubio, 15 f. Tetuán 1952); Muḥammad b. Ibrâhîm al-Ījî, in Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 220; and, in particular, van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre*, 257 ff., 274 ff.

For a very different modern elaboration of the theorem that “neither observation nor reason can be described as a source of knowledge,” cf. K. R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* (New York and London 1962).

about God (*maʿrifat Allāh*) is a duty of every Muslim. It is a duty either on the basis of reason, as maintained by the Muʿtazilah, or on the basis of tradition (*samʿ*), as argued by al-Ījī himself. In fact, it is the first duty of every responsible Muslim. After the discussion of three more problems concerning the application of rational speculation, analogical reasoning is briefly mentioned as the successful method of rational speculation. Only very briefly is the role of traditional evidence in achieving knowledge touched upon. It is considered very restricted, and highly disputed as to its effectiveness in intellectual matters.

In the following three “stations,” al-Ījī continues his epistemological reflections with the customary survey of the situation as regards the objects of knowledge. The remaining two “stations”—followed by a brief concluding section, principally on the various Muslim sects—deal with metaphysics, God and His attributes, and with traditional religion, prophecy, resurrection, faith and unbelief, and the imāmate. They cover only two-fifths of the entire work. This is not without significance. The theological purpose of *kalām* is always present, and it constitutes, of course, the *raison d’être* for the labors of the author. But it has here been pushed into the background by the intense interest of al-Ījī and his environment in the problem of knowledge. On the other hand, the premises posited in connection with the theological purpose have gained a position of undisputed acceptance. This fact finds its principal expression in the role attributed to “necessary knowledge” which, as we have seen, has taken the place of “knowledge” as such in the *khutbah* of the *Mawāqif*. Theology, it turns out, is forever based upon “knowledge,” but knowledge has been tailored to fit the needs of theology.

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Following the theologians, the writers on “the principles of jurisprudence” also came to adopt an epistemological introduction in their works. In their case, this was a slower process than the corresponding development in theology, and for good reasons. Theology was inspired, as we have seen, by precedents outside Islam. Moreover, unlike jurisprudence, it was not primarily directed toward action and the practical needs of society. Its fundamental concern was with metaphysical data, and it aimed at achieving insight and inner certainty (which is not to deny, of course, the

practical consequences inherent in the work of the theologians). Concerned as it was with practical affairs, jurisprudence might have managed to stay away from any theoretical speculation about knowledge to a large extent, if not entirely. However, this was not the course it was to take. Muslim jurisprudence started out as “knowledge” (*‘ilm*). The fact that the word employed for jurisprudence (*fiqh*) was indeed one of the general terms in Arabic indicating mental activity and assumed its restricted technical meaning only in Islam continued to give some linguistic support to the identification of jurisprudence with knowledge. Just as the traditionists considered *‘ilm* pure and simple to mean the kind of knowledge that formed the subject of their particular discipline, the jurists claimed *‘ilm* by preference to be legal knowledge, although they happened to be somewhat less successful than the traditionists in this endeavor.<sup>112</sup>

Already ash-Shâfi‘î’s *Risâlah* shows a deep concern not only with what constitutes legal knowledge and demarcates its extent but also with the more demanding and searching subject of how legal knowledge can be obtained and its correctness and propriety explained and justified.<sup>113</sup> It may, however, be noted that his brief discussion of the sources of knowledge still remains buried within the context of the work. It is not given the prominent position in the beginning which would have proclaimed it to be the basis for the entire subsequent discussion. Moreover, it is fully obvious that ash-Shâfi‘î rejected the possibility of, and certainly did not feel compelled to adduce, logical reasoning in order to establish the general character of knowledge and to show how this might affect the sources of legal knowledge. For the jurist, the close observation of linguistic usage is another indispensable tool for finding legal knowledge and plays a much larger role than it does for the theologian. Thus, it is not surprising that ash-Shâfi‘î already includes repeated references to the importance of an accurate knowledge of the Arabic language for those who wish to understand the processes leading to the formation of the law.

The state of affairs reached by ash-Shâfi‘î and observable in his famous *Risâlah* underwent a marked change soon after his time. However, the results of this change become tangible for us

<sup>112</sup> Cf. also below, pp. 243 ff.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. ash-Shâfi‘î, *Risâlah*, trans. Khadduri, 81, 289 f. Cf. above pp. 72 f.



only about two centuries later. The course taken by the jurists concerned with the principles of jurisprudence can be surmised with reasonable certainty. *Ra'y* "opinion," *ijtihād* "independent judgment," and *qiyās* "analogical reasoning"—all three terms, and, in particular, *ijtihād* and *qiyās*, originally being synonyms<sup>114</sup>—were, as J. Schacht has shown, the basic source of legal knowledge for early Islam. The task of defining their role in jurisprudence and of restricting this role to a greater or lesser extent was undertaken by the legal schools which achieved predominance with the ninth century. Mu'tazilah theologians who were concerned with the law naturally stressed the paramount and nearly exclusive importance of analogical reasoning and the methodology, out of which it grew, which was *nazar* "rational speculation."<sup>115</sup> Their attitude was fought by their dogmatic opponents in their concern with the law with all the means at their disposal. However, modified and deprived of its uncompromising insistence upon reason, it was taken up by subsequent "Ash'arite" theologians, and it thus managed to get into the mainstream of Muslim legal thought. As al-Āmidī saw quite correctly in retrospect, one of the disciplines that nourished the science of the principles of jurisprudence was the *ʿilm al-kalām*.<sup>116</sup> The quarrel with the Mu'tazilah/Mutakallimūn resulted in the urgent necessity for jurists to give attention to the problems of knowledge, and, ultimately, it led to the unshakable habit of stating their attitude toward the sources of knowledge in the philosophical sense and doing so at the very outset of their discussion. The fact that *qiyās* also served as a central term in formal logic as the Arabic term rendering Greek *sylogismos* apparently had no direct bearing on the connection of legal theory with epistemology. However, another avenue leading jurists to the discussion of the problems of the attainment of certainty in knowledge was opened up to them by the science of *ḥadīth*. For *ḥadīth* scholars, the requirements governing the transmission of traditions so as to give sufficient assurance of their truthfulness were a matter of constant concern.<sup>117</sup> The writers on the principles of jurisprudence took over this discussion as far as was needed for their purposes, but it stayed within the treatment of the Prophet's

<sup>114</sup> Cf. ash-Shāfi'ī, *Risālah*, trans. Khadduri, 288.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. J. Schacht, *Origins*, 128.

<sup>116</sup> See below, pp. 238 f.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. above, p. 195.

*sunnaḥ* as one of the sources of legal knowledge. It did not push itself forward to the head of the exposition as did the *kalām*-derived epistemology.

The development outlined makes it unlikely, and indeed impossible, that works on the principles of jurisprudence could have had introductions dealing with “knowledge” before such introductions had made their appearance in works on speculative theology. The relevant legal material that has been preserved is large and has not yet been adequately studied. When it becomes available, much of what has been stated here as based upon inference may be confirmed—or refuted. Presently, however, it would seem probable that legal authors did not get around to writing such introductions before well into the tenth century. Even thereafter, these introductions were not as standardized in form and contents as were their counterparts in works on speculative theology, and they seem always brief in proportion to the usually massive size of the work of which they form part. They differ considerably in size, and their size would seem to be a measure of the weight they were intended to carry. Al-Ghazzâlî went so far as to state expressly that his introductory remarks on intellectual perception according to the elements of logic at the beginning of the *Mustasfâ* could be safely omitted by copyists who wished to do so, because they applied to all scholarly disciplines in general and were not restricted in their application to the principles of jurisprudence.<sup>118</sup>

Ibn Ḥazm’s<sup>119</sup> principal motive as an author of works on jurisprudence and theology was the refutation, often undertaken in very bitter terms, of the Ash‘arites and, in their forefront, al-Bâqillâni. As is well known, Ibn Ḥazm was opposed in principle to the use of *qiyâs* as a source of law. But he was also convinced of the validity of evidence resulting from the intellect and deductive reasoning, and he believed in innate, necessary knowledge: “We

<sup>118</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mustasfâ*, I, 7.

<sup>119</sup> Judge ‘Abd-al-Jabbâr’s *‘Umad* on the principles of jurisprudence (cf. Ibn Khaldûn, *Muqadimah*, trans. Rosenthal, III, 29) has not yet been recovered, or is preserved only in part, if the identification in Sezgin, I, 625, is correct. The beginning of the seventeenth section of his *Mughnî* which dealt with the principles of jurisprudence is also not preserved in the manuscript described by M. El-Khodeiri, in *Mélanges de l’Institut Dominicain d’Études Orientales du Caire*, V (1958), 421, cf. also the edition of Vol. XVII of the *Mughnî* (Cairo 1962).

The works of ad-Dabûsî (d. 430/1039, cf. Sezgin, I, 456), which should have been consulted, were not accessible.

are forced to recognize (*ma'rifah*) that the things are realities (*ḥaqā'iq*) and that they do exist as they are, and that nobody knows how this (insight) came to him . . . This knowledge (*ma'rifah*) that is ours of necessity and created by the Creator in our souls after they have joined the body when we first show understanding (*fahm*) constitutes the origin for the discernment of true as distinguished from untrue data (*ḥaqā'iq/bawātil*) and the elementary basis for every knowledge (*ma'rifah*).<sup>120</sup> In his *Iḥkām* on the principles of jurisprudence, he refers to his previously published *Taqrīb* on logic for a more detailed exposition of the logical foundations on which his discussion rests.<sup>121</sup> For his introduction, he chooses as his first topic the various powers given by God to man, such as justice, wrath, desire, understanding (*fahm*), ignorance, intelligence (*ʿaql*), and “the power of discernment which the ancients have named logic (*mantiq*), through which God has opened up a path toward understanding His divine, address, toward the knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) things as they are,<sup>122</sup> and toward the potential achievement of understanding (*imkān at-tafahhum*), through which man mounts the ladder of understanding (*fahm*) and is delivered from the darkness of ignorance. This power brings into being the knowledge (*ma'rifah*) of truth as distinguished from untruth.”<sup>123</sup> Ibn Ḥazm subjects to his critique the four views concerning the sources of knowledge, that is, that all knowledge is derived 1. from inspiration (*ilhām*), or 2. from the teachings of a religious leader (*imām*), or 3. from transmitted information (*ḵabar*), or 4. through a blind trust in tradition (*taqlīd*). These do not admit the possibility of evidence gained through reasoning, which Ibn Ḥazm upholds.<sup>124</sup> On the origin of language, he does not want to commit himself, but he tends toward the view that the single original language of mankind, from which all other languages were derived, owes its development not to convention but to divine teaching (*tawqīf*). Very sensibly, he argues against those who feel that there are qualitative differences between the various languages, and who claim that theirs is the best (*afḍal*) language.<sup>125</sup> The subject

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkām*, III, 9. See also Ibn Ḥazm, *Taqrīb*, 156.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkām*, I, 8, 36, also, IV, 71, V, 82, 107.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. definitions B-3 and B-4, above, pp. 54 f.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkām*, I, 4.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkām*, I, 13.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkām*, I, 33.

of language leads to a long list of definitions for the technical terms of rational speculation, including definitions of the two terms for definition (*hadd* and *rasm*).<sup>126</sup> This is immediately followed by the definition of knowledge. In this connection, Ibn Ḥazm polemicizes expressly against Ash'arite definitions of *ilm*. With reference to his *Taqrīb*, he states that knowledge may be necessary knowledge derived primarily from sense perception or intuitive knowledge, or it may be derived from primary rational and sensory data.<sup>127</sup> Or knowledge may be obtained by following an individual whom God has commanded other human beings to follow as the bringer of truth not on the basis of necessity or rational deduction. He discusses terms such as *i'tiqād* "belief," *burhān* "proof," *dalīl* "evidence," *ṣidq* and *kadhīb* "truth/falsehood," *ḥaqq* and *bāṭil* "true/untrue," *jahl* "ignorance" (that is, "the absence of the reality of knowledge from the soul"), *ʿaql* "intellect," as well as *ma'lūm* "known, object of knowledge." *Ma'lūm* includes as necessarily certain knowledge what is known through well attested tradition from the Prophet, or what is agreed upon by all Muslim scholars as going back to the Prophet, or what is transmitted by one reliable authority on the authority of other reliable scholars going back to the Prophet.<sup>128</sup> The explanation of technical terms is followed by an elaboration of the precise meanings of the particles of speech, as this is of supreme importance in many cases for finding the law.<sup>129</sup>

Al-Ghazzālī expectedly takes a rather different approach in the preliminaries of his standard work on the principles of jurisprudence, the *Mustasfā*. His preface (*khuṭbah*) sets the tone with a long paean on knowledge. The intellect comes first, and knowledge follows it. However, knowledge clearly enjoys here much greater esteem and deserves particularly to be stressed in connection with jurisprudence: "Praised be God," al-Ghazzālī starts out, "who made the intellect the most desirable of treasures, and knowledge the most profitable of merchandise, the noblest of high glories, the most honored

<sup>126</sup> As in Ibn Ḥazm, *Taqrīb*, 19.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. also Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkām*, I, 65.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkām*, I, 41 f.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkām*, I, 51 ff. See also Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal, III, 25 ff.

The *Kitāb al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh* by the Imām al-Haramayn is another of the works on the principles of jurisprudence which might help to round out the picture presented here, if it were preserved, but it seems that it has not yet been recovered.

of effective and praiseworthy accomplishments, and the most lauded result of everything, so that through its asseveration pens and inkwells have been ennobled, through its study prayer niches and pulpits have been adorned, through the tracing of its pages and fascicles have been embellished, through its nobility lesser men have gained precedence over bigger men, through its splendor secrets and hidden things have been illumined, through its lights hearts and eyes have been filled with light, in its brilliance the sun's shining brilliance has assumed insignificance for the revolving sphere, and in its inner light the outward light of eyes and glances has become puny, so that as a result through its brilliance the armies of the hearts and minds have been enabled to delve into the deepest abysses of obscurities, even though the eyes were too weak for them and they were thickly covered by veils and curtains." Obedience to God consists of knowledge and intelligence. In this respect, knowledge is again to be rated higher than the intellect. There are three kinds of scholarly disciplines (*ʿulûm*), namely, 1. those that are purely intellectual, 2. those that are purely traditional, and 3. those of the highest type, that is, those consisting of a combination of intellect and tradition, opinion and religious law. It is to the last mentioned category that the science of the principles of jurisprudence belongs. The introduction of the *Mustafâ* deals with epistemology, the attainment of speculative knowledge through definition and proof. It features a theoretical discussion of definition and its application to such terms as definition itself and knowledge, followed by a discussion of the theory of logical proof. There are no extended lists of defined terms nor any detailed speculation about language in the manner of Ibn Ḥazm. Al-Ghazzâlî later on investigates the problem of the derivation of knowledge from well attested tradition. Such knowledge, he says, was denied by the Sumanîyah, while among the Muʿtazilah, Abû l-Qâsim al-Kaʿbî al-Balkhî considered it as derived in fact from rational speculation.<sup>130</sup>

Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî's influential *Maḥṣûl* on the principles of jurisprudence<sup>131</sup> first defines in some detail the meaning of *fiqh*. Then, the author argues that an explanation of the significance of the concepts of knowledge, guesswork, rational speculation, and

<sup>130</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mustafâ*, I, 85.

<sup>131</sup> For Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî, *Maḥṣûl*, I used the modern copy in the Yale University Library L-643 (Catalogue Nemoy 1039).

religious law (*ḥukm sharʿī*) is needed, and he proceeds to present briefly his theory of knowledge. There are various kinds of knowledge. We have knowledge derived from the five senses and knowledge derived from feelings such as pleasure and pain (*wijdānīyāt*), which are related kinds of knowledge. We have knowledge through intuition and knowledge through rational speculation. They fall into another category. Then there is knowledge derived from a combination of sense perception and reason. This knowledge is also of two kinds. There is knowledge derived from a tradition based on information transmitted by many authorities (*mutawâtirāt*) which relies upon a combination of hearing (*samʿ*, oral transmission) and reason, and there is knowledge based upon experience and conjecture (*mujarrabāt* and *ḥadsīyāt*) which relies upon a combination of reason and the other four senses. After knowledge, there come blind belief (*iʿtiqād al-muqallid*), ignorance, doubt, guesswork, and estimation (*wahm*). As usual, more space is required for the subsequent explanation of rational speculation and evidence (*dalīl/amārah*). The obligatory chapter on language, which again is not very detailed, includes a remarkably clear exposition of the theory of the social origin of language as a means of communicating individual needs by members of a group.

Al-Âmidī, who was born only a few years after Fakhr-ad-dīn ar-Râzī, wrote not only the important work on theology discussed before but also an impressive manual of the principles of jurisprudence, entitled *al-Iḥkām*, or *Iḥkām al-ḥukkām, fī usūl al-aḥkām*. Like ar-Râzī, he does not follow al-Ghazzālī's example with respect to the inclusion of a flowery *khutbah* with its popularizing praise of knowledge. For his starting point, he chooses the Aristotelian dissection of the subject matter of any given scholarly discipline. The items to be clarified are the meaning (*maʿnā*) of the subject by means of definition (*ḥadd* and *rasm*), its object, its end, its problems and conditions that bear investigation, and its foundations and basic principles on which to build (*istimdād*). The verbal definition of *fiqh* as simply meaning "knowledge" does not appear to be quite acceptable to the author. It seems that he on his part prefers that of "understanding" (*fahm*) (Fakhr-ad-dīn ar-Râzī had more fancifully expressed himself to the effect that the lexical meaning of *fiqh* was to be defined as "a notion expressing the purpose of the speaker by his speech"). The foundations upon which the principles of jurisprudence build are three, speculative

theology, the Arabic language (*al-ʿArabīyah*), and the religious laws (*al-aḥkām ash-sharʿīyah*). A separate chapter is devoted by al-Āmidī to each of them. The briefest chapter is the one discussing the foundation derived from theology. Definitions only of evidence, rational speculation, knowledge, and guesswork are said to be needed, and they are therefore presented. The discussion of language, and its origin is here somewhat more extensive but remains comparatively concise. Consideration of the questions whether a well attested tradition can provide knowledge and whether it could generate, knowledge comes as usual later in connection with the discussion of traditional information.<sup>132</sup>

Innumerable lawyers, the political leaders of the Muslim community everywhere, were trained for their profession by the study of works of the kind described. They were thus thoroughly imbued with the idea that in their legal work, they were engaged in the application of “knowledge”. Theirs was a particular knowledge evolved from certain sources according to certain rules. However, it was by no means fundamentally different from what was implied in the basic understanding of the concept of knowledge. It was their particular task to evaluate human actions, and this they were trained to do according to the conformity or lack of conformity shown by those actions to a “knowledge” previously acquired in some sort of rational manner.

As medieval Muslims themselves might have put it, theology and law were the twin pillars of Islam responsible for the welfare of the Muslim community in the other world as well as in this. As we might say, they were the determinants of a social structure distinguishing Muslim society from other societies. What deserves to be stressed is that both were seen basically as “knowledge”, and they were labeled “knowledge” by preference. The “knowers” (*ʿulamāʾ*), first in the view of the representatives of theology and law but later on for the generality of Muslims, were, specifically, the members of the learned classes that controlled all religious life and the civilian aspects of political life. But it was not merely factual knowledge. It was also knowledge resting, or so it was believed, on a scientifically demonstrable epistemological basis.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. al-Āmidī, *Iḥkām*, I, 151, 156.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### KNOWLEDGE IS SOCIETY (Education)

#### 1. *Ilm-Amal-Adab*: KNOWLEDGE, ACTION, GENERAL EDUCATION

Information is the cement that holds together any human society, and a continuous process of education is necessary to assure its preservation and extension. The goal is always identical, but the stages may be marked by a different terminology, and thereby the value system sustaining a given society on its course is altered in appearance and reality. The specific problem confronting us here is the degree to which a generalizing abstraction such as “knowledge” has dominated the verbalization of the human striving for improvement through learning and education in Islam. As we have seen, the term “knowledge” itself represents different notions and values. Modern discussions of what type of knowledge and what kind of education are preferable clearly show that the knowledge desired by some may mean ignorance and stagnation for others. However, the complexion of a society cannot fail to impress its historian as different, if all its intellectual efforts and, indeed, all its educational efforts constantly stress the importance of the term “knowledge” and the terms “teaching” and “learning” which, among the languages of Muslim peoples, the linguistic structure of Arabic at least makes almost one and the same thing as knowledge, and if there is nothing, neither morality, nor piety, nor action, nor any other possible societal value that enjoys the same degree of exposure as is reserved to “knowledge.” For medieval Muslim civilization, we have to rely upon the evidence of the preserved literature. Its abundance and variety make it virtually certain that the glorification of knowledge expressed by it extended to all phases of life and educational activity and to all classes of the population. It is hard to conceive of any place, no matter how remote, where there might have existed anyone, no matter how humble and uneducated, who was not filled with awe when he heard the word “knowledge.” And it was generally recognized that any genuine betterment of an individual’s standing in society depended on his share of knowledge, in preference to the uncertain avenues



of birth, power, and wealth, or as yet un verbalized values such as individual identity, usefulness to society, and the like.

There is pleasure (*ladhdhah*) in knowledge for the person who possesses knowledge.<sup>1</sup> According to Aristotle, the characteristic pleasure of man, the one he does not share with all other animals, is the pleasure of knowledge (*ladhdhat al-ma‘rifah*).<sup>2</sup> A littérateur and philologist such as Abû Hilâl al-‘Askarî tells us how deeply he felt this pleasure of knowledge, which comes after the long process of learning, and he puts his feeling into verse: “Since we have come to know about the pleasure of knowledge, neither the sweet nor the tasty pleases us any more.”<sup>3</sup> Since knowledge secures access to happiness in both this world and the next, it is the greatest of pleasures, just as ignorance is the greatest of pains.<sup>4</sup> In fact, one who has tasted the pleasure of knowledge would never think of finding pleasure in anything else.<sup>5</sup> A veritable physical love (*‘ishq*) can be felt for knowledge. This is stated in a work on love by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzîyah in the first half of the fourteenth century.<sup>6</sup> The lovers of knowledge feel a stronger attraction and infatuation than do lovers for their beloved, and even the most beautiful human form may not be capable to divert many a lover of knowledge from his one true love. Scholars cannot be tempted into giving up their dedicated search for knowledge, even if strenuous study affects their health. Half a century before Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzîyah, al-Anṣârî expressed what was also in the mind of the later scholar, namely, that the love of knowledge—al-Anṣârî uses the less sensual term *maḥabbah*—is part of man’s innate love of any kind of inner perfection. In the Qur’ân, it is said that every group is pleased with

<sup>1</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mizân al-‘amal*, 191.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Kitâb as-Sa‘âdah*, 43, 46 ff., 54, also, 84, where studying is described as a passive pleasure; at-Tawhîdî, *Imtâ‘*, II, 36. On the Greek side, cf., for instance, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1174b21; *Metaphysics* 1072b24. The *Mahâbhârata* also speaks of knowledge as the only pleasure, or rather, as something that makes pleasure superfluous, cf. L. Sternbach, in *JAO*, LXXXIII (1963), 52a.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. al-‘Askarî, *Ḥathth*; also his *Dîwân al-ma‘ânî*, II, 78 (Cairo 1352).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. al-Kâfiyaji, in Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 575. In a more restricted sense, knowledge is one of the pleasures of this world. It becomes useful for the other world, only if it is acted upon, cf. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdâdî, *Iqtidâ‘*, 169. See also above, p. 205, n. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, 177, in the name of Plato.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzîyah, *Rawḍat al-muḥibbîn*, ed. A. ‘Ubayd, 68 f. (Cairo 1375/1956).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Qur’ân 23: 53/55 and 30: 32/31, where a negative judgment is intended.

what it has,<sup>7</sup> and the philosopher al-Kindī, following Hellenistic, and probably Stoic, tradition, had explained it as the result of habit that even harmful and despicable accomplishments such as those of the gambler, the female impersonator, the swindler and thief, were a source of joy and pride for those who could boast of them.<sup>8</sup> It was known to the Muslims from the opening sentence of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* that the desire for knowledge is a natural endowment of all human beings, and it was considered one of God's greatest gifts to mankind that he created them lovers of knowledge through their own psychological disposition (*min anfusihim*).<sup>9</sup> For al-Anṣārī, too, it is a psychological need that makes man fall in love with whatever he happens to know, and the pleasure caused by such love grows in intensity, the more important the object of his psychological affection turns out to be: "The soul loves the objects of knowledge it has attained, whether they are noble or vile. However, the nobler a given object of knowledge is, the greater is the pleasure caused by his knowledge in the person who attains it. Nobody is entirely devoid of some pleasure caused by some knowledge. A child feels pleasure through his acquaintance with different games and is happy, if he is called efficient in those games and described as excelling his friends by his skill in them. The soul of a person who knows a craft rejoices at the realization that he alone knows it. Even a chess player is happy with his knowledge of chess. The pleasure it gives him diverts him from eating and drinking. He is pained, if he is called a poor player. Likewise, we find a man who knows the secrets of ruling a city and how to administrate it as nobody else does, rejoicing at his knowledge (*ma'rifah*) and his mastery over the conditions to be fulfilled by one who wants to be able to exercise political power. Now, assuming he knows the secrets enabling him to rule the entire earth, the pleasure given him by the feeling of being qualified for this task and being good at it would compare with no other pleasure.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. H. Ritter and R. Walzer, *Uno scritto morale inedito di al-Kindī*, 33 f., 49 f. (Rome 1938, *Mem. R. Accad. Naz. dei Lincei*, VI, VIII, 1), quoted by al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā'*, III, 51. In connection with the passage, M. Pohlenz, in *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, CC (1938), 414, refers to Epictetus, *Encheiridion*, III, 1, 26 ff., ed. H. Schenkl, 235 ff. (reprint Stuttgart 1965), which, however, contains only an attack upon effeminacy. Cf. also Aristotle, *Problemata* 917a6 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. al-ʿAmirī, *I'lām*, 86.

How great, then, must be the pleasure of the man who knows about (‘*r-f*’) God...!”<sup>10</sup>

The ways in which authors on all conceivable subjects as well as those dealing technically with the subject of education tried to benefit from the charismatic role they had helped to create for the concept of knowledge in Muslim society are innumerable and cannot be exhaustively presented. Only a few special aspects may be chosen here for discussion. It was only natural for an author to stress, however briefly, his conviction that he was making a contribution to knowledge, and this he did at the beginning of his work. More important, there was a rather general desire to present one’s own particular discipline as *the* knowledge. This reflects in part the fact that the word *‘ilm* also designated the individual scholarly discipline. Thus, while speaking of his own discipline, a scholar could very well refer to it by the abbreviated designation of “the discipline” (*al-‘ilm*). However, scholars were also inclined to consider the subject they cultivated the only true knowledge. The religious history of *‘ilm* in Islam constituted an especially strong challenge in this direction. As we have seen, the religious disciplines were in the forefront of those attempting to restrict the term “knowledge” to their own concerns. The device employed frequently was a bipartition of knowledge, with one part favoring a particular branch of learning, and the other being branded as useless, on the model of the Prophetical tradition stating that “Knowledge is of two kinds (lit., two knowledges), a knowledge in the heart and a knowledge on the tongue; the knowledge of the heart is the useful knowledge, while the knowledge of the tongue is God’s argument against His servants.”<sup>11</sup> Great fame and influence attached to a remark by ash-Shâfi‘î that “knowledge is of two kinds, the knowledge of religion and the knowledge of this world.” This was explained, apparently not by ash-Shâfi‘î himself, as referring to jurisprudence as the knowledge that goes with religion, and to medicine as the knowledge that goes with this world. “Every-

<sup>10</sup> Cf. al-Anṣārî, *Mashâriq anwâr al-qulûb*, ed. H. Ritter, 49 (Beirut 1379/1959).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Concordance*, IV, 330b53 f., quoted, for instance, by Ibn Qutaybah, *‘Uyûn*, II, 126; Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 227, where it is ascribed to al-Ḥasan (al-Baṣrî); Ibn Taymiyah, *al-Imân*, 17.

thing else, such as poetry or the like, is trouble and blemish.”<sup>12</sup> For Şûfis, as is to be expected, this explanation was highly unsatisfactory. Abû ‘Uthmân al-Maghribî (d. 373/983–84) felt no hesitation to praise ash-Shâfi‘î for what must have been very far from the latter’s mind, namely, that “the knowledge of religions” was the knowledge of the true realities and of gnostic insight (*al-ḥaqā‘iq wa-l-ma‘ārif*), while “the knowledge of the bodies” was the knowledge of the various ways of political (?) guidance, ascetic training, and mystic exercise (*as-siyāsāt wa-r-riyādāt wa-l-mujāhadāt*).<sup>13</sup> Other, earlier Şûfis had similarly appropriated *al-‘ilm* for mysticism by stating, as al-Junayd is supposed to have done, that “knowledge is of two kinds, the knowledge of extension (*bast*) from the oneness of the One to the very end of multiplicity, and the knowledge of contraction (*qabd*) from multiplicity to (that) oneness.” For Ruwaym (d. 303/915–16), the two kinds of knowledge were “rational and traditional, the rational knowledge being eternal, and the traditional knowledge being time-bound; the rational knowledge being the root, and the traditional knowledge being the branch.” For Abû l-Abbās Ibn ‘Aṭā’ (d. 309/921–22, or 311), they were, in turn, “clarification and obfuscation, the former belonging to the hearts, and the latter belonging to the tongues.” Abû Sa‘īd al-Kharrāz had already progressed from two to three kinds of knowledge, “the knowledge of technical skills (*ṣinā‘āt*) applicable to the various species of compound objects, the knowledge of words (*lafẓ*) applicable to the composition of expressions, and the knowledge of management (*tadbīr*) applicable to the various kinds of political guidance (*siyāsāt*).”<sup>14</sup>

In his work on the literary fixation of knowledge (*Taqyīd al-‘ilm*), the Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī leaves no doubt that although the “knowledge” of the work’s title is supposed to include all worthwhile religious knowledge, his intention was to equate it with the science of the Prophetical traditions. The commonly accepted idea that the various branches of knowledge differed in importance and value

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As an example of the rather typical narrow-minded approach to the subject of useful versus useless knowledge, one may compare Ibn Rajab’s *Fadl ‘ilm as-salaf*.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ibn Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī, *Ādāb ash-Shāfi‘ī*, 321 f. (Cairo 1372/1953). For ash-Shāfi‘ī’s statement, see also Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 208.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. as-Sulami, *Ṭabaqāt*, 480. In this context, *siyāsāt* would seem to refer to individual “management,” training and self-control. However, in al-Kharrāz’ statement cited below, it appears to refer to group control.

<sup>14</sup> The preceding four statements are to be found in Abû Ḥayyân at-Tawḥidī, *Basā‘ir*, ed. I. al-Kaylānī, I, 466 (Damascus 1964). Cf. also above, p. 184.

was easily pressed into service for claiming exclusive title to “knowledge” for the discipline considered the most important one of all—one’s own. When Abû l-Layth as-Samarqandî in the tenth century spoke of the excellence of knowledge, he came out right away with the statement that the knowledge he had in mind was jurisprudence. “Knowledge is good, and the best and most important knowledge after the knowledge about God and God’s oneness is jurisprudence.”<sup>15</sup> Some room had to be made for the knowledge of the Prophetical traditions, therefore, “knowledge is where there is the expression, ‘he transmitted to us’; everything else is the whispering of devils.” And “all the sciences except the Qur’ân and the traditions are heresy.”<sup>16</sup>

Scholars in the field of non-religious sciences were obviously not in a position to be as outspoken in their attempts to monopolize “knowledge” for their particular endeavors. When a representative of *adab* used the device of the two kinds of knowledge, he could praise the *‘ilm al-adab* as serving the important purpose of “cleansing and polishing the hearts,” yet, he had to acknowledge that preference was due to the other knowledge, the knowledge that prepared a person for his salvation in the other world.<sup>17</sup> Esoteric disciplines such as alchemy claimed to be “the craft” (*aş-şan‘ah*), and also “the science” (*al-‘ilm*), as in the title of a work in the Jâbir corpus, “On Confidence in the Soundness of the Science.”<sup>18</sup> We also find, for instance, Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî in the beginning of his commentary on Ibn Sînâ’s *Ishârât* burst into the customary praise of knowledge: “All hearts agree, and all minds concur that knowledge is the most excellent happiness and the most perfect perfection and degree, and that the men of knowledge are the most distinguished and most outstanding of men.” Then, with the help of the expression “especially,” he inferred that this applied in particular to the true philosophical sciences, which therefore alone constituted real, worthwhile knowledge.<sup>19</sup> However, the non-

<sup>15</sup> A verse ascribed to ash-Shâfi‘î admits as *‘ilm* only the Qur’ân, the *ḥadīth*, and jurisprudence, while all the rest is Satanic twaddle, cf. as-Subkī, *Ṭabaqât ash-Shâfi‘īyah*, I, 157. This was, in fact ash-Shâfi‘î’s view, cf. above, pp. 72 f.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. the Istanbul Ms. Topkapusaray, Ahmet III 1548 (Catalogue Karatay, III, nos. 5213 and 5230).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. al-Qurashî, *Jamharat ash‘âr al-Arab*, ed. ‘Ali M. al-Bajâwî, 38 f. (Cairo, n.y.; [1968?]).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 357 = 502; Kraus, *Jâbir*, I, 70, no. 236.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. above, p. 61, n. 6.

religious sciences had often to be satisfied with merely stressing the usefulness of all knowledge, including their own. Nonetheless, all their representatives liked to think of the term “knowledge” as preferably applying to their own specialties. There was no real value for society in any subject, unless it was called indispensable knowledge more useful than any other knowledge.

Of singular significance for the fate of the term *‘ilm* in societal organization and in education was its pairing with *‘amal* “action.”<sup>20</sup> In their combined use, it may be noted, *‘ilm* usually precedes *‘amal*. Knowledge comes before action. A *ḥadīth* of the Prophet that “it is charity (*ṣadaqah*) to learn (*‘l-m*), to act accordingly, and to teach,” provoked the comment that here knowledge was mentioned before action.<sup>21</sup> An exact quotation of Matthew 5:19 (*poiēsēi kai didaxēi*) as a *ḥadīth* in at-Tirmidhī speaks of “acting and teaching” in this sequence,<sup>22</sup> but elsewhere, it appears in the form of “studies and knows and acts.”<sup>23</sup> *‘Ilm* and *‘amal* became a standard combination whose effectiveness was greatly enhanced by the similarity of the two words in sound and in their written forms. It is impossible to escape its impact in any work that touches even remotely upon individual or societal ethics in Islam.

The relationship of action and thought had long been a subject of intense speculation. Euripides, for instance, considered it the greatest evil to know the good but make no use of it, and Muslim scholars were familiar with the translation of his verse.<sup>24</sup> In the Greek tradition, the relationship was also discussed under the

<sup>20</sup> For the position of *ḥikmah* “wisdom” in connection with action, see above, pp. 38 f.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Abū Khaythamah, no. 138.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. above, p. 89.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Abū Khaythamah, above, p. 73.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. A. Nauck, *Tragicorum graecorum fragmenta*, 2nd ed., 635, Euripides, no. 841 (reprint Leipzig 1926); Stobaeus, III, 205; ‘Alī b. Riḍwān, *Fī t-taṭarruq bi-t-ṭibb ilā s-sa‘ādah*, in the Istanbul Ms. Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha, 691, fol. 124a, citing Galen. *Fī ta’arruf al-insān ‘uyūb nafsih*, for the verse: *Yā laka min amrin mā aqbahāt wa-arda’ahū an ta’rifā l-khayra wa-lā ta’mala bihī*. The author’s name is given as *‘wḍysws*, which, however, is hardly Odysseus but in all likelihood, a slight misspelling of Euripides. Galen’s *Peri tōn idiōn hekastōi pathōn kai hamartēmatōn tēs diagnōseōs* does not contain the passage. For the various forms of the title of this work of Galen in Arabic translation, cf. G. Bergsträsser, *Hunain Ibn Ishāq über die syrischen und arabischen Galen-Übersetzungen*, no. 118, text, 48 f., trans., 39 f. (Leipzig 1925, *AKM* 17, 2).

aspect of the development of *theôria* from *praxis*<sup>25</sup> or of the problem of the priority of *noêsis*, *nous praktikos*, *theôria* as against *praxis*. In this sense, Muslim thinkers such as Abû Ḥayyân at-Tawḥîdî made statements to the effect that “Action (*fi‘l*) is the source of knowledge.”<sup>26</sup> His contemporary, al-‘Âmirî, maintained that knowledge stood in the same relationship to action as cause to the thing caused, or beginning to end,<sup>27</sup> and he also put it this way: “Knowledge is the beginning (*fâtîḥah*) of action, and action is the end (*tamâm*, here = *energeia*, rather than *entelecheia*) of knowledge; a beginning without an end is futile, and an end without a beginning is absurd.”<sup>28</sup> In the Judæo-Christian tradition, it was faith versus good deeds. A Church Father, however, spoke of deeds following upon knowledge (*gnôsis*), as the body is followed by its shadow.<sup>29</sup> Gnosticism saw man’s nature revealed in his *praxis* and his *gnôsis*.<sup>30</sup>

In Islam, as we have seen, “faith” was originally equated with “knowledge,” and the most prominent and decisive element in the *‘ilm-‘amal* confrontation remained the Prophet’s view of the

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Snell, *Die Ausdrücke für den Begriff des Wissens*, 19, n. 3. For the Stoics, *phronêsis* meant information about correct action, according to M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa*, I, 202 (Göttingen 1948–49).

<sup>26</sup> As quoted by Ibn al-Maṭrân, *Bustân al-aṭibbâ’*, near the end (Ms. Army Medical Library).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. al-‘Âmirî, *I‘lâm*, 125.

<sup>28</sup> As quoted in the Bodleian Ms. or Marsh 539, fol. 124a. The first half of the statement occurs also in al-‘Âmirî, *I‘lâm*, 78, with the substitution of *mabda’* for *fâtîḥah*, and the continuation: “Excellent knowledge (*‘ulûm*) is desired only for the sake of good actions.” For wisdom as the combination of *‘ilm* and *‘amal*, cf. above, pp. 38 f., and, for instance, al-Mubashshir, 33 (Homer): “Wisdom means that the form of knowledge is attained through action.”

<sup>29</sup> Clement, as cited by Antonius Melissa, 933 f.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Böhlig and Labib, *Die koptisch-gnostische Schrift*, 108/109; “Jeder wird durch seine Handlungsweise (*praxis*) und seine Erkenntnis (*gnôsis*) seine Natur (*physis*) offenbaren.”

For the Chinese view of the relationship of knowledge and action, cf. below, pp. 338 f. There seems to be little of it in India, where knowledge and action may occasionally be compared to the two wings of a bird which are both needed for flying, cf. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, II, 228 (Cambridge 1932). (The simile of the two wings is applied in Arabic to hearing and seeing, cf. al-Ḥuṣrî, *Ẓahr al-‘adâb*, III, 115 [Cairo 1316, in the margin of Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *‘Iqd*]). In our time, a utilitarian, action-directed view of knowledge is held by some, such as V. G. Childe, *Society and Knowledge*, 4 (New York 1956): “To deserve the name, I contend, knowledge must be communicable and in that sense public and also useful, I mean, capable of being translated into successful action.” This sounds like a greatly impoverished version of attitudes encountered frequently here as Islamic.

necessary relationship of religious knowledge with good deeds and proper action. As the process of classifying the entire gamut of human actions in terms of religious obligations went under way, it was only natural for "actions" to be equated with religious duties such as prayer, charity, and so on. When religious scholars later on contrasted *ʿilm* and *ʿamal*, they often seem to have had in mind the actions covered by the Muslim religious commitment. The Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī is particularly emphatic in his insistence upon the necessity of action in connection with knowledge in his instructive collection of statements entitled "Knowledge Requires Action."<sup>31</sup> He sees the greatest drawback of the disciplines he esteems most, that is, Qurʾān reading, *ḥadīth*, and grammar/philology, in the temptation to turn their back on action to which scholars learned in these disciplines are unavoidably exposed. The Khaṭīb seems to favor action as the only possible way "to lay in provisions for the Last Day" and to achieve salvation. Many of his strongest statements in favor of action go back to famous Ṣūfīs, for whom action was important, as they naturally esteemed it primarily as referring to the non-contemplative aspects of the mystic discipline. In the view of the philosophers in the Hellenistic tradition, on the other hand, action was often understood as the effort that had to be made in order to achieve receptivity for pure knowledge by cleansing oneself from all the impurities of man's lower desires. The final synthesis of the philosophical and the Judeo-Christian-Gnostic traditions found expression in two statements contained in al-Ghazzālī's *Mizān al-ʿamal*: *ʿilm* and *ʿamal* are the preparation for the other world, and the only way to happiness, the real goal of philosophy, is through the combination of *ʿilm* with *ʿamal*.<sup>32</sup>

It can be asserted with considerable assurance that in the Muslim view, knowledge by and large ranks higher than action.<sup>33</sup> The entire history of knowledge in Islam indicates this to be the case. The higher estimation of knowledge is, for instance, expressed in the constantly cited Prophetical tradition showing preference for the man who knows (*ʿālim*) as against the pious worshiper who fulfills all the religious duties (*ʿābid*). It may not be without interest

<sup>31</sup> Cf. al-Khaṭīb al al-Baghdādī, *Iqtidāʾ*, which covers about seventy-five pages.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Mizān al-ʿamal*, 180, 193 f., 328. The Ṣūfī, Bishr al-Ḥāfi even went so far as to claim identity for *ʿilm* and *ʿamal* (*wa-l-ʿilm huwa al-ʿamal*), cf. Abū Nuʾaym, *Hilyah*, VIII, 340 f.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. also G. E. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, 236 (Chicago 1946).



here to recall that following ancient Semitic tradition, the Arabic word *‘abid* represents a specialized meaning of the root meaning “to work.” Understandably, the statement that “knowledge is the leader of action, and action is its follower”<sup>34</sup> came to be promoted to the status of a tradition of the Prophet. In connection with it, five reasons are given for the superiority of knowledge: 1. Knowledge without action is an action,<sup>35</sup> whereas action without knowledge is not an action; 2. knowledge without action may be useful, whereas action without knowledge is not useful; 3. knowledge is necessary, and action follows it like a lamp (which is as necessary as is knowledge, if there is to be light, or, like as a shadow follows the light of a lamp<sup>2</sup>); 4. scholars hold the same rank as the prophets; and 5. knowledge comes from God, whereas action comes from human beings.<sup>36</sup>

The basic position of *‘ilm* as compared to *‘amal* is reiterated on every possible occasion. A particularly appropriate and effective vehicle for accomplishing this purpose was the wisdom literature of Hellenistic inspiration. It attributes, for instance, these sayings to Hippocrates: “Knowledge is the spirit, and action is the body. Knowledge is the root, and action is the branch. Knowledge is the father, and action is the child. Action came about because there was knowledge. Knowledge did not come about because there was action.” And again: “Action is the servant of knowledge, and knowledge is an end. Knowledge goes out (itself to do its own) foraging. Action is sent.”<sup>37</sup> An unnamed philosopher said: “The intellect is the tree whose root is knowledge, whose branch is action, and whose fruit is the law (*sunnaḥ*).”<sup>38</sup> For al-Ghazzālī, knowledge was indeed “the root of roots,” for “action can take on form (*yutaṣawwir*) only through knowledge of the manner in which the action is to be undertaken,” and there is also some knowledge,

<sup>34</sup> Cf. above, p. 184.

<sup>35</sup> Not to be corrected to “knowledge.”

<sup>36</sup> From the *adab* work of a certain Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad to be dated in the late fifteenth century (cf. *GAL*, *Suppl.*, II, 57), cited here in the Istanbul Ms. Hasan Hüsnü Pasha 976, fol. 23b. No title is given in the manuscript, although in the beginning, the author refers to *‘ilm al-muḥāḍarāt wa-fann al-muḥāwarrāt*, which is at the origin of the title indicated in *GAL*.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, 51. Cf. also al-Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, I. 31 = I. 61; Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn*, II, 121 (see below, p. 257), who cite a statement of Yūnus b. Ḥabīb, equating knowledge with the spirit, and property with the body. This is cited anonymously by al-Mubashshir, 334. The first sentence of the second saying above appears in al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Iqtidā’*, 158.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. at-Tawḥīdī, *Baṣā’ir*, I, 389.

such as the knowledge of God and His attributes and His angels, which has nothing to do with action.<sup>39</sup> It is, therefore, very hard to conceive of any worthwhile action where there is no knowledge. Plato is supposed to have advised those who “miss the path of knowledge” that they “should not miss the path of proper action or the avoidance of evil deeds, as they would thereby stand in the shadow of the master of the world.”<sup>40</sup> Nothing more is meant here than the obvious fact that not everybody possesses scholarly ability. There are numerous human beings who act without knowledge, but they are no better than animals. Their actions are habitual and instinctive. There can be no useful, human action without knowledge.

Conversely, the general assumption was that there could be no useful knowledge without the existence of action resulting from it. Purely intellectual and inspirational knowledge not immediately connected with action might still be useful, because, it makes necessary the action which assures bliss in the other world, the fulfillment of the obligations of the religious law. We hear a good deal about extremist groups among the Shī‘ah and among Sūfīs who allegedly thought it possible to dispense with action, because they were in the possession of knowledge or of gnosis. Occasionally, reference is made in the literature to obscure, and possibly non-existent, minor sects such as the one called Fikrīyah “Reflectionists.” They are supposed to have championed the view that persons who study in order to acquire knowledge, and devote themselves to reflecting upon the knowledge acquired are thereby freed of action and of fear. Everybody else is obliged to comply with all their wishes and desires. They have a partner’s share in the property of all the people of the world who commit a crime if they refuse them anything.<sup>41</sup> In all such cases the “action” envisaged concerns

<sup>39</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Mīzān al-‘amal*, 328.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, 167.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. ‘Uthmān b. ‘Abdallāh al-‘Irāqī, *al-Fīraq al-muṣṭarīqah*, ed. Y. Kutluay, 70 (Ankara 1961). In Ḥamīd-ad-dīn al-Kirmānī’s treatment of Fāṭimid-Ismā‘īlī religious philosophy, “faith” is a combination of “worship through knowledge” (*al-‘ibādah bi-l-‘ilm* or *al-‘ibādah al-‘ilmīyah*) and “worship through action” (*al-‘ibādah bi-l-‘amal* or *al-‘ibādah al-‘amalīyah*). This is the *leitmotif* of his *Rāḥat al-‘aql*, cf., for instance, 30, 64, 68, 122, 248, 319 ff. On p. 154, he characterizes the “people of faith” as those who worship through knowledge as well as action, the “people of the *ẓāhir*” as those who worship only through action, and the “people of the *bāṭin*” as those who worship only through knowledge. But the last mentioned

mainly the formalities of the Muslim ritual law which those groups were suspected to have despised and even to have suspended. A strictly contemplative life or a life devoted to pure science might have been desired by some individuals and considered by them the ideal way of life. However, they can always have been but few in number. Their ideal was never the ideal preached to, and accepted by, the vast majority of Muslims. Knowledge without corresponding action was undesirable and even unthinkable. "If there were no action, one would not search for knowledge, and if there were no knowledge, one would not search for action."<sup>42</sup> Society required that both knowledge and action were cultivated, and education saw to it that individuals strove to fulfill their duty with respect to both. The preference expressed frequently for knowledge seems to have stamped Islam as a social organism somewhat averse to action and more inclined toward intellectual pursuits. The state of a perfect balance between action and knowledge seems to be something of a utopia which cannot be achieved in human society, and it was not achieved in Islam. It is hard to say whether the Muslim weighting of the scales in favor of knowledge was the wiser course. However, all historical factors were clearly working toward that end and made it all but inevitable.

The relationship between knowledge and action and the expression it finds in the life of individuals constitute the true measure of the worth of any given society. There is another, more restricted and formal relationship shaping human civilization. That is the relationship between knowledge and education. In Islam, it is characterized by the combination of *‘ilm* with *adab* on the one hand, and with *ta‘līm* "instruction" and *ta‘allum* "study" on the other. Knowledge was conceived as the result of study and instruction in all its practical aspects. Thus, it is to be expected that the term "knowledge" and the root *‘l-m* are somehow at the core of all the technical educational writings in Islam. The role of knowledge in the large

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category seems to have no justification for independent existence (except, perhaps, in the case of the imāms?). For just as the *ẓāhir* by itself is naturally unsatisfactory, "the omission to teach the right *ẓāhir* worship means the perdition of the religious group with (all) its people, since its forms (*rusūm*) are thereby broken and wiped out," cf. *Rāḥat al-‘aql*, 349. It must be concluded that knowledge alone is also unsatisfactory.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn*, II, 125 (an anonymous sage); Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 222; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Iqtidā’*, 158; al-Mubashshir, 51 (Hippocrates).

and diversified *adab* literature is much less clear-cut, due primarily to the wide range of the term *adab* itself. The *adīb* was the “educated” man. To what extent this also meant the learned, knowledgeable man is the question that interests us here. Like *‘ilm* and *‘amal*, *‘ilm* and *adab* were also often paired with each other. In this case, however, no preference is apparent for giving precedence in speech to one of the two terms. The combination “*adab* and *‘ilm*” seems to be at least as frequently used as the combination “*‘ilm* and *adab*.” *Adab* here is clearly the wider term, as it includes matters of ethics, morals, behavior, and custom, in addition to those of learning. It also would seem to be the more ancient term, as far as cultural significance is concerned, having enjoyed this role already in pre-Islamic Arabia.<sup>43</sup> However, *‘ilm* was backed up by the vast power it acquired through Muslim religious developments, and somehow, *adab* had to join forces with it. It developed into a commonplace that both belonged inseparably together. “Knowledge without *adab* is like, fire without firewood. *Adab* without knowledge is like a spirit without a body.”<sup>44</sup>

## 2. *‘Ilm* in *Adab* Anthologies

*Adab* works<sup>45</sup> are hard to classify. It was left to the individual authors which particular aspects of general education and culture they wished to deal with. Concentration at some length on some particular subject led to monograph essays. It would seem that such monographs constituted the earliest stage of *adab* literature

<sup>43</sup> Cf. F. Gabrieli, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s. v. *adab*.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. as-Sam‘ānī, *Adab al-‘imlā’*, ed. M. Weisweiler, *Die Methodik des Diktatkollegs*, 2 (Leiden 1952).

<sup>45</sup> “*Adab* works” is used here in a restricted sense, referring to prose essays and the anthologies generally designated as such. Technical essays on, for instance, calligraphy, secretaryship, or literary criticism have not been considered and have only incidentally been mentioned. As a rule, their attitude toward *‘ilm* does not differ greatly from that of other scholarly disciplines. The entire realm of poetry, which is a province of *adab*, even if its vast extent makes it possible to put it into a category all its own, has also been excluded. The attitudes of the major Muslim poets toward “knowledge” would make an interesting subject of study. However, broadly speaking (and being fully conscious of my ignorance of most of the immense body of poetry produced in Islam), it would seem that poetry kept its inherited distance from “knowledge” (above, pp. 12 ff.). As a term of praise for rulers and statesmen and, of course, scholars, knowledge is often mentioned in poetry. The customary praise of the virtues of knowledge was also occasionally put into verse, as was, more rarely, the embittered criticism of the problems knowledge might cause for individuals.

in Islam. Very soon, almost simultaneously perhaps, large collections combining, as it were, a number of monographs, which in the view of their authors usually represented the entire spectrum of *adab*, were composed. This development found its completion already in the golden age of the ‘Abbāsids. The *adab* literature never changed its basic forms of monograph and anthology, nor did the great popularity especially of the anthologies ever diminish. The anthologies remained a favorite arsenal from which all those longing for a general education, for the prestige going with being considered an educated person, could draw their ammunition. It can safely be assumed that the influence of what they had to offer was coextensive with the ability to read books. The choice and arrangement of topics in the *adab* anthologies varied. The expected increase of religious influence upon an essentially secular literature is perceptible but on the whole rather insignificant; it does not affect the degree of attention paid to the term “knowledge.” The noteworthy marriage of religious and *adab* scholarship in the early ninth century as represented by the *Muṣannaf* of Ibn Abī Shaybah has previously been commented upon.<sup>46</sup> It appears to have remained without any genuine offspring. The manner in which the *Muṣannaf* brings together *‘ilm* with *adab* shows substantial similarity with what we find in later *adab* works, but its spirit and intent were on the whole rather different. Greek philosophy may have been responsible for promoting the use of the concept of intelligence (*‘aql*) in *adab* literature. The possession of intelligence as the first step toward the attainment of knowledge was rather naturally stressed in an *adab* context in the *ḥadīth* work of ad-Dārimī as early as the first half of the ninth century,<sup>47</sup> and no doubt even earlier than that. However, when the *‘aql* of Greek philosophy seeped more deeply into general Muslim consciousness, it found its way into *adab* literature almost as naturally as *‘ilm* did from the religious vantage point. This led to a kind of rivalry between *‘aql* and *‘ilm* and their opposites (mainly, *ḥamâqah* and *jahl* in the first case, and *jahl* in the second). The distinction between *‘ilm* and *‘aql* often tended to be obscured. On the level of *adab* in particular, whatever distinction was made between the two seems as a rule quite artificial.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Cf. above, pp. 74 f.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. above, p. 76.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. below, p. 273, n. 3 and p. 276, n. 2.

According to all we know, the term *ʿilm* played no great role in *adab* works during the eighth century. Still indicative of this early stage of the history of *adab* literature is the much later anthology of al-Bayhaqî, entitled *al-Maḥâsin wa-l-masâwî*, which dates from around 900.<sup>49</sup> The theme of the work, the confrontation of the good aspects and the bad aspects of a number of human qualities of character and behavior, would not have prevented the inclusion of a separate chapter on knowledge. However, there is none. The introduction shows that the author thought of *ʿilm* and *adab* as belonging together but much less closely so than became the customary assumption of later times. Typically, most of the introduction is devoted to a discussion of books and writing. If the related *Kitâb al-Maḥâsin wa-l-aḍâd* is, as claimed, a work by al-Jâḥiẓ,<sup>50</sup> a similar situation would be attested for the first half of the ninth century. The work begins likewise with a chapter on writing and the production of books and has no separate discussion of knowledge. In fact, more than the abstract idea of knowledge, it was the technical aspects of bookmaking which were of concern to the *littérateurs* who occupied themselves with the transmission of educational wisdom. Similarly the famous catalogue of book titles by Ibn an-Nadîm, though arranged according to the various disciplines of science and scholarship, does not care to discuss knowledge as such. Here again, the introduction is concerned with various aspects of bookmaking and writing. In it, the author's attention is directed mainly toward the mechanics of literary and scholarly book production and publication. Encyclopaedias, too, devote hardly ever any space to the theoretical problems of knowledge or consider it necessary to enter into any extended discussion of the praiseworthy qualities of knowledge. And where knowledge is equated with *ḥadîth* as in the *Tagyîd al-ʿilm* of the Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî, one does hardly expect to find much speculation on knowledge in general. There is a long section in praise of writing and of books.

However, a chapter on knowledge appears already in the second half of the ninth century in the great anthology of Ibn Qutaybah, the *ʿUyûn al-akḥbâr*. The *Fihrist* lists this chapter as a part of

<sup>49</sup> Cf. al-Bayhaqî, *Maḥâsin*, ed. F. Schwally (Giessen 1902).

<sup>50</sup> The edition at my disposal has no place or year (Beirut 1955?).

the *'Uyûn* under the title of *Kitâb al-'Ilm*.<sup>51</sup> In the *'Uyûn* itself, it is called *Kitâb al-'Ilm wa-l-bayân* "On Knowledge and Eloquent Expression." Less than one-tenth of it is devoted to knowledge proper. The remainder of the chapter consists of eloquent statements in prose and verse as well as interesting or curious items of information and witty anecdotes pertaining to books, to the Qur'ân and Qur'ân readers, to the transmission and the transmitters of Prophetic traditions, to the Shî'ah, the Mu'tazilah (Qadariyah), and the Mutakallimûn (coupled with some praise of Abû Bakr and Umar), to Arabic grammar and lexicography, to the proper approach to teaching, to the virtues of eloquence and of silence and of communication without speech, to poetry ("the mine of the Arabs for their knowledge..."), to clever repartees, to specimens of epistolography and chancellery documents, and to sermons of political leaders with the circumstances under which they were delivered. As the following summary shows, the section on knowledge as such, brief as it is, contains practically all the standard information on the subject which recurs in later *adab* works:<sup>52</sup>

A statement by the Prophet warning against *ughlûât*, which is interpreted to mean "difficult problems," or "tricky questions" (as mentioned above, p. 84).

A story concerning Abû Muslim al-Khawlânî to the effect that the benefits to be derived from deserving men are never properly utilized by their compatriots and are as a rule better appreciated by strangers. A quite exact quotation of Mark 6:3 f. that a prophet is not honored in his own country.

Knowledge is acquired by asking and answering questions,<sup>53</sup> according to the genealogists Daghfal and al-Bakrî. The latter also states that the blemishes of knowledge are forgetting, making

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 77, l. 23 = 115; G. Lecomte, *Ibn Qutayba*, 156 f., 165 f. (Damascus 1965). See Ibn Qutaybah, *'Uyûn*, II, 117–259.

<sup>52</sup> The passage analyzed on the following pages covers *'Uyûn*, II, 117–30. It may be said here that cross-referencing in the footnotes has been kept to a minimum throughout this book, but particularly, in the treatment of the *adab* material. It should be kept in mind that a rather limited number of ideas has found expression in a large number of statements which, while often formulated differently, say pretty much the same.

<sup>53</sup> *Adab* and *ḥadīth* constantly call attention to the fundamental role of asking questions in the educational process. For a philosopher such Ibn Bâjjah, *Fi n-naḥs*, 146, giving information and asking question are synonymous with, respectively, teaching and studying. Knowledge was described as rooted in the question after cause and evidence in the remark attributed to al-A'mash: *al-'ilm fī li-ma* "knowledge rests in why?," cf. Abû Nu'aym, *Ḥilyah*, V. 47.

false statements, and spreading knowledge among those not qualified for it.

“A man remains knowing as long as he searches for knowledge and continues to study. When he thinks he knows, he has become ignorant.”<sup>54</sup>

According to the Prophet, the four blemishes of knowledge are boasting of one’s knowledge and feeling superior on account of it to recognized scholars,<sup>55</sup> entering into contests with fools on the strength of one’s knowledge, trying through it to influence people in his favor, and attempting to obtain favors from leaders in powerful positions by means of it.

The Prophet has stated that extended worship makes the springs of wisdom flow from the heart to the tongue.

Luqmân admonishes his son that being a scholar or a student, listening or loving<sup>56</sup> are the only activities to which he ought to devote himself.

The Prophet has expressed confidence that there will be men who will stave off all attempts to pervert “this knowledge” (*i.e.*, the Prophetical traditions).

Sayings of ‘Alī, including: “He who does not know must not be ashamed to learn,” and, “A person who is asked something he does not know must not be ashamed to say, ‘God knows.’”<sup>57</sup> The proper respect to be shown to scholars is described by ‘Alī in detail. He is credited with the constantly repeated statement that “Knowledge is better than property. For knowledge protects you, while you must protect property. Property is diminished by spending, while knowledge thrives on spending.”<sup>58</sup> ‘Alī’s celebrated remark: “A man’s value consists in what he knows or does well.”<sup>59</sup>

<sup>54</sup> This expression of the idea that learning is a continuous process (cf. also below, p. 281) also appears in the section of anonymous sayings in al-Mubashshir, 333.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. p. 87 [at-Tirmidhī (5)], and p. 172, n. 2.

<sup>56</sup> *Mujīb*<sup>m</sup> “answering” would seem an appropriate correction of *muhibb*<sup>m</sup> “loving,” but cf. Abū Khaythamah, no. 2: “If you are able to be a scholar, be a scholar! If not, be a student! If you are not a student, love them! If you do not love them, do not hate them!”

<sup>57</sup> Cf. below, pp. 310 f.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. below, p. 326. This comes from ‘Alī’s exhortation of Kumayl b. Ziyād an-Nakha’ī, which appears in a more complete form in Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 120 f., and in the *fürstenspiegel* of aṭ-Turtūshī, *Sirāj al-mulūk*, ch. 22, 64 f. (Cairo 1289). Cf. also *Nahj al-balāghah*, 593 ff.; Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd, V, 434–39; al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā’*, I, 7, trans. Faris, 14; Abū Nu’aym, *Hilyah*, I, 79 f.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. below, pp. 281 and 323. The remark is highly praised in *Nahj al-balāghah*, 518 f., cf. also 624.



The fact that God has rejected a human being is indicated by His preventing him from acquiring knowledge.

The man who has knowledge is considered most outstanding among people,  
Even if he does not occupy a position of nobility among his people.  
Wherever he settles, he can make a living from his knowledge.  
A man who possesses knowledge is no stranger anywhere.

Buzurjmihr considers *adab* a man's best inheritance, since it helps him to acquire wealth, while ignorance ruins it. (Note that *adab* is contrasted here with ignorance, as if *adab* were a synonym of *‘ilm*.)

A person who does not appreciate history and poetry and falls asleep while listening to poetry or historical anecdotes is like a donkey in human form. The idea that lack of knowledge makes a man a non-person is illustrated by an anecdote about the caliph al-Walid b. Yazid who does not bother with concealing the fact that he has been playing chess from an ignoramus who comes in unexpectedly.<sup>60</sup>

A book of the Indians (that is, *Kalilah wa-Dimnah*) teaches that a scholar's knowledge accompanies him and provides for him wherever he goes, and thus is comparable to the strength of a lion which always stays with him.<sup>61</sup>

“Knowledge is the highest nobility, just as love is the strongest of ties.” Four verses in praise of the usefulness of the stereotyped combination of *hilm* “kindness, gentility” and *‘ilm*.

Knowledge means true leadership. Honor paid to a man because of his wealth or his power ought not to please him, because it may pass with their passing. Honor paid to a man because of his *adab* or his religiosity is something to be pleased about. Muḥammad: “The scholars on earth are comparable to the stars in heaven.” The value of knowledge is indicated by the fact that nobody likes to risk the loss of his share of it.

“Your knowledge belongs to your spirit. Your wealth belongs to your body.”<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Cf. the first two references of n. 2.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. also al-‘Askari, *Ḥathth*, in Ms. Aṣir Ef. 433, fols. 43b–44a; ar-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, I, 17; az-Zamakhsharī, *Rabī‘*, in Ms. Yale L-5, fol. 172a; al-Ibshihī, *Mustaṭraf*, I, 17. See F. Schulthess, *Kalila und Dimna, syrisch und deutsch*, text, 67, trans., 67 (Berlin 1911).

<sup>62</sup> Cf. above, p. 249, n. 4.

“Kings exercise control over people, and scholars exercise control over kings.”<sup>63</sup>

Buzurjmihr esteems knowledge more highly than wealth, with reference to the anecdote cited below, p. 325.

According to the *ḥadīth*, flattery is permissible only in the search for knowledge.

Ibn ‘Abbās: “I was humble when seeking (knowledge as a student), and I was mighty when sought (to give instruction as a teacher).” He shows great respect to the Anṣār as bearers of the knowledge of the Prophet.<sup>64</sup>

“The first part of knowledge is keeping silent; the second, listening; the third, memorizing; the fourth, reasoning; and the fifth, spreading it.” In the company of scholars, it is better to listen than to talk. “He who worships God in his youth receives wisdom from God in his old age” (cf. Qur’ân 28:14/13). A sage among the men around the Prophet represents wisdom as saying that it is with those who act in accordance with their best knowledge and avoid all that is very bad in their knowledge.

“A scholar (*‘ālim*) has no contempt for those who know less than he, and no envy of those who know more, and he does not use his knowledge to make money.”

Teachers must not be too severe, and students must not be bashful. According to Luqmân, a dignified quiet on the part of scholars makes people willing to learn. Loquaciousness repels them. On the value of asking questions in order to gain knowledge: “Put questions like a fool, and store up information like a genius.” Six verses ascribed to Ibn al-A‘râbî. Another verse, elsewhere ascribed to Bashshâr b. Burd, which runs:

The cure of blindness (ignorance) is prolonged questioning.

Blindness materializes through prolonged silence in the state of ignorance.

Six further statements on the necessity of asking questions and of not being too bashful in this respect. Learning can bring it about that those who are young and insignificant among their own people are esteemed as old and important among others. Ignorance is particularly abhorrent in old people. One should teach those who

<sup>63</sup> Cf. below, p. 328, n. 3.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqât*, ed. E. Sachau and others, II, 2, 221 (Leiden 1905–40); Abû Khaythamah, no. 133; al-‘Askarî, *Ḥathth*, in Ms. Aṣir Ef. 433, fol. 44a.

are ignorant, and learn from those who know. Buzurjmihr acquired his great knowledge by rising early like a raven, being greedy like a pig, and being steadfast and patient like a donkey. Knowledge ought to be acquired at a young age. As the standard simile (cited also elsewhere with some variations) puts it: That is like chiseling in stone, while studying in one's old age is like beating upon water.

“Practicing *fiqh* without knowledge (that is, without an acquaintance with the Prophetical traditions) is like being a donkey working at a mill, going around without ever stopping.”

Scholars who have to spend their time among ignoramuses, or, even worse, are under their control, are to be pitied.<sup>65</sup>

Knowledge, being more precious than pearls, must not be wasted upon the pigs who do not want it. This quotation of Matthew 7:6 is often repeated in *adab* works.

On obstinate (*mu‘ānid*) and wicked (*fājir*) scholars, which is a kind of contradiction in terms.

“Skill (*ḥirfah*) is found among scholars. Others have wealth.” “You are looking for something rare (lit., little) among the few. Thus, you will not find it. You are looking for wealth, which is rare among men, among the scholars, who are few among men.”

A verse by al-Khuzaymī apparently to the effect that pride in a long line of ancestors is a sure guarantee of a lack of brains and a lack of *adab*. Two verses by somebody else, apparently indicating that their author believes that his professional skill and his *adab* could not possibly be greater. A verse by Abū Tammām stating that “the mother of stupidity is fertile and has many children, while the mother of knowledge is barren, deprived of posterity.”

Seeking leadership through knowledge quickly means a great loss of knowledge, according to Sufyān ath-Thawrī.

On the relationship of knowledge and action: Knowledge, calling out for action, departs, if its call is not answered. An ignorant man is forgiven seventy sins, before one sin is forgiven to the person who possesses knowledge. Evil actions should not deter anyone from accepting good advice from the individual who commits them. This has been said by Bilāl b. Abī Burdah and is expressed in a famous verse, here ascribed to al-Khalīl:

Act in accordance with my knowledge, and do not look at my actions.  
In this way, what I say will prove useful to you, and my shortcomings will do you no harm.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. below, p. 332.

The light of knowledge must not be extinguished by dark sins. Knowledge is sought on account of action, and not vice versa.<sup>66</sup> Leaving the truth alone because of one's ignorance is better than doing so through inaction. According to Mâlik b. Dînâr, the exhortations of a man whose actions do not follow his knowledge roll off the heart like drops of water from smooth rocks.<sup>67</sup> This remark bears comparison with a statement attributed to Ziyâd that talk that comes from the heart goes to the heart, while talk that comes from the tongue does not go beyond the ear (a statement which has little to do with the subject under discussion). The knowledge scholars possess causes them to act. Eventually, they will be sought after by the people, but as true scholars, they will flee from all the worldly demands made on them. High praise is due to the man who speaks and knows, who listens and retains, who retains and acts. According to Ibn Mas'ûd, an error committed by a scholar (in his activities) may cause him to forget all he knows.

Ibn 'Abbâs considers it deadly for a scholar not to say continually, "I do not know." See below, pp. 310 f.

Verses to the effect that a poet never says more than he knows. Other verses starting out in the same vein but then going on to say that a man's actions suffice to reveal his secret thoughts.

'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭâb contributes the rather resigned insight that men are never as jealous of knowledge as they are of their wives.

Salmân indicates the need for teaching and publication in the words, "Knowledge which remains unexpressed is like treasure unused."

The *ḥadīth* about the two kinds of knowledge, discussed above, p. 243.

'Umar on the desirability of the combination of *ḥilm* and *ʿilm*.

Abû d-Dardâ' expresses himself on the burden scholars have to bear in these words: "An increase in knowledge means an increase in pain."

Statements by Plato and another sage to the effect that consciousness of not knowing indicates knowledge. An elaboration of this idea is attributed to al-Khalîl: "There are four kinds of men. There are men who know and know that they know. Put questions

<sup>66</sup> Cf. above, p. 251.

<sup>67</sup> As cited by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdâdī, *Iqtidâ'*, 192, Ja'far b. Mâlik maintained that he had read this statement in the Torah.

to them! There are men who know and do not know that they know. They are forgetful. Remind them! There are men who do not know and know that they do not know. They require guidance. Teach them! And there are men who do not know and do not know that they do not know. They are ignorant. Shun them!”<sup>68</sup>

Buzurjmihir, reproachfully reminded by Kisrâ that his knowledge has brought him into prison and even endangered his life, denies that this has been the result of his knowledge, which he enjoyed in times of good fortune. He also remarks that as long as life is good, it is good to study and to learn. This prompts the insertion of a statement made by somebody else that since ignorance is shameful, learning and knowledge are good.

“Friendship (*tawaddud*) is the ornament of knowledge.”

‘Umar puts his awareness of the restlessness for more and more knowledge that possesses true scholars, in these words: “Scholars are more prone to sleeplessness and slower to have enough to eat than any guests.”

Mâlik b. Dînâr: Little knowledge suffices, if one wants it for himself, but it takes much to satisfy the many needs of people.

The first aphorism of Hippocrates about the abundance of knowledge and the brevity of life.<sup>69</sup>

The Messiah (Jesus) says, “For how long are you going to describe the way travelers ought to take, while you yourselves are staying among those beset by confusion? Of knowledge, little is needed; of action, much.”<sup>70</sup>

Salmân: “If I told the people all I know, they would say, ‘May God show mercy to the killer of Salmân.’” (The apparent meaning of this remark is that he possesses compromising information, or rather, that esoteric knowledge should not be spilled indiscriminately. It does not really belong into this context.)

<sup>68</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ’*, I, 52 f., trans. Paris, 155 f. Cf. also Ibn Abî d-dunyâ, *al-‘Aql wa-faḍluh*, ed. M. Z. al-Kawtharî, 26 (Cairo 1365/1946); al-Qurashî, *Jamharah*, 39 f.; the anonymous Christian work entitled *al-Bustân*, in Ms. Paris ar. 4811, fol. 9b. See further below, p. 313.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. F. Rosenthal, in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, XL (1966), 226 ff. The passage in the *Uyûn* furnishes another example of the pre-Ḥunayn translation of *ho de kairos oxyis* as *az-zamân ḥadîd*, as against Hunayn’s *ḍayyiq*.

<sup>70</sup> The statement may well have some basis in the Gospels, but it is not contained in them in this form. “Knowledge” would seem here to correspond to “faith.” Cf. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādî, *Iqtidâ’*, 178; al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ’*, I, 52, trans. Paris, 155. Paris thinks of a combination of Luke 6:39 and 7:32(?).

If a person says something he does not know, it casts suspicion upon what he knows.

The soul, being refractory, needs the collaboration between the leader—knowledge—and the driver—the intellect.<sup>71</sup>

The difference of opinions alone makes a person aware of possible mistakes of his teacher.

“The intellect is female by nature, and knowledge acquired is male. Only together can they thrive.”

The Messiah (Jesus) says: “God shows the greatest hatred for a scholar who loves to be remembered when being abroad, who is given much room in gatherings, who is (often) invited for dinner, and who has bags of provisions poured out for him (?). In truth, I say to you, ‘Those have taken their wages in this world, and God will double their punishment on the Day of Resurrection.’” Strange as this may seem at first glance, the passage may reflect Mark 12:38 f. (Luke 20:46 f.)

Ibn ‘Abbâs remarked at the funeral of Zayd b. Thâbit that it was in this manner that knowledge disappeared—through the death of scholars.

God’s love is earned by a man through being a scholar and at the same time behaving as inconspicuously and modestly as if he were an ignoramus.

A facetious verse on scholars meeting: “If elephants meet and crowd together, what must be the condition of a mosquito in the middle!”

Verses by Ibn ar-Riqâ<sup>72</sup> to the effect that he has accumulated such a large amount of pleasant and unpleasant experiences in his life that he could no longer learn an iota from any scholar.

Among the four things a noble person need not be ashamed of is serving a scholar in order to learn from him.

‘Aṭâ’ b. Muṣ‘ab’s remoteness from and indifference to the Barmecides made him popular with them, although others possessed more *adab* than he did.

Good understanding and good listening are necessary for appreciating a good *ḥadīth*. This is in a way illustrated by two verses of Abū Tammâm.

<sup>71</sup> The edition of the *‘Uyûn* has “action,” instead of “intellect.” This does not make good sense. The reading “intellect” appears elsewhere. In an-Nuwayrî (below, p. 273), it is the only justification for citing the saying. See also above, p. 174.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. R. Blachère, *Histoire de la littérature arabe*, 475 f. (Paris 1952–66).

The difference between scholars and men of education and general culture: Scholars specialize in one subject. Educated men pick the best part of everything.

Verses by Ibrâhîm b. al-Mahdî which admit the haphazardness of the distribution of worldly goods but contend that nobody would deny that worldly goods most consistently elude those who possess *adab*, that they are tied up inextricably with stupidity, and that they cling to fools.

The *môbedh*, the chief priest, wins praise from Anûsharwân for his remark that a pure nature is satisfied with a whiff of *adab* and a hint of knowledge and that wisdom can grow only in the proper soil.

At the end of time, there will be scholars who will not practice what they preach. They will preach abstention from this world and a desire for the other world, but they will practice neither. They will forbid approaching the men in power, but they themselves will approach them. They will prefer the rich and keep the poor away. They will hold back when they are together with lowly individuals, and they will be expansive when they are in the company of important persons. They will be tyrants, enemies of God.<sup>73</sup>

‘Abdallâh b. ‘Umar is credited with the saying that “Knowledge consists of three things, a book that speaks, a *sunnah* that comes from the past, and (admitting one’s ignorance by saying) ‘I do not know.’”<sup>74</sup>

This is the end of the remarks dealing with knowledge proper in the chapter on knowledge of the *Uyûn*. The length of the preceding summary is due to the impossibility of combining individual items into any coherent groupings. A grouping according to authorities is absent, except for the single case of some remarks ascribed to ‘Alî. Clusters of sayings on the same topic are found more frequently, but the same topic may again be taken up in later passages. A particular problem is posed by the first three statements whose connection with the subject of knowledge is not easily explained. No simple solution suggests itself. Perhaps, the reference to the lack of regard for prophets and pious men in their

<sup>73</sup> The remark is ascribed to Jesus in Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 227.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Abû Tâlib al-Makki, *Qût*, II, 3, Ibn Hâzim, *Ihkâm*, VII, 30; ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahânî, *Muḥâdarât*, I, 28 (attributing it to an unnamed jurist). Instead of “that comes from the past” which seems the appropriate translation of *mâḍiyah*, we find elsewhere *qâ’imah* “well-established.” Contrast above, p. 179.

own countries is meant to indicate that scholarship and scholars are often not appreciated as much as they deserve to be and that they should be considered as being on the same level as prophets and saints. Mention of the Prophet's expressed aversion to "difficult problems," as the term *ughlûṭât* is explained,<sup>75</sup> appears all the more to be out of place here as subsequent sections of the chapter dealing with grammar and lexicography depend heavily on tricky and recondite material. It would seem that the Prophet's warning is to be understood here as being directed against problems that may cause doubt. Thus, the *ḥadīth* would recommend the necessity of cultivating certain and assured knowledge, which would be the same as simply "knowledge." Ibn Qutaybah could have found a more pertinent and straightforward Prophetic tradition to introduce his discussion of knowledge. He might have felt that the cryptic quotation was flattering to the intelligence of his readers and would in a way arouse their interest in what he was going to say.

In its connection with language, grammar, and rhetoric, "knowledge" is here conceived as the comprehensive term for the principal subject to be studied by the educated individual, the ways and means of proper and effective linguistic expression. Their mastery is the first as well as the last step in the curriculum of the *adīb*. "Knowledge" thus conceived is therefore fittingly claimed to be the *adīb*'s true and basic knowledge. In Ibn Qutaybah's presentation, the religious development which turned *ʿilm* into a synonym of *ḥadīth* and religious scholarship in general makes its influence already felt, and the term is often to be understood in this specialized sense. The repeated references to the Gospels is another indication of religious influence. Quotations from the Jewish and Christian Scriptures are frequent in Ibn Qutaybah's work and reflect the broad-minded concern of the educated layman no less than the theologian with religious and intellectual matters outside the boundaries of Islam. Ibn Qutaybah's guiding principle, however, is the consideration that in the realm of *adab*, "knowledge" refers to *adab*'s most important intellectual aspect, the ability to handle the magnificent and complicated tool of the Arabic language.

This is further confirmed by the position which the chapter on knowledge and eloquent expression occupies in the *Uyūn* as a whole. It is part of a trilogy that itself has its place between the

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. Ibn ʿAbd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 225.



discussion of the political and military leadership to be exercised over large or small groups of human beings and the discussion of the behavior required of individuals in material matters. Within this trilogy, it is preceded by a treatment of the behavior of men and animals resulting from their physical makeup and their character qualities (including stupidity). And it is followed by a chapter on the recommendable aspects of religious piety in daily life. Consequently, it can be said that in Ibn Qutaybah's view, "knowledge" stands for the only approach to everything to some degree abstract and intellectual that is permissible in *adab* education which in general has the cachet of materialism and practicality. This would seem to be a somewhat restricted role, but it is clearly one of special significance in an environment that had so much reverence for abstract thought. In a way, its connection with *'ilm* pulled *adab* into the orbit of a specifically Muslim culture.

About half a century after Ibn Qutaybah, the Spaniard, Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih, compiled the famous *Iqd*, his great *adab* anthology. The *Iqd* has a long chapter entitled "The Ruby on *Ilm* and *Adab*."<sup>76</sup> Much of Ibn Qutaybah's material is duplicated here. However, it often appears in a somewhat fuller form which all but excludes the possibility of a direct dependence for at least part of the material common to both authors. The general position of the chapter on *'ilm* and *adab* is after the discussion of political leadership, and is thus the same as that of the corresponding chapter in the *Uyûn*. The *Iqd*'s treatment of *'ilm* itself is considerably more systematic than that of the *Uyûn*. In other respects, the coherence of Ibn Qutaybah's general arrangement is not preserved. The title of the chapter indicates that *'ilm* and *adab* are to be considered as forming an inseparable pair. As suggested also by the philosophical scheme of the classification of the sciences, the preceding treatment of political science might be taken to constitute a subject in itself, rather than a part of *adab*. For all the remaining aspects of *adab*, *'ilm* functions as a necessary foundation. Both together, as Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih explains in his introductory remarks, are "the two poles around which the religion and the world revolve

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 206 to III, 62 (the reprint of volume III used here is dated Cairo 1372/1952). The section dealing with *'ilm* constitutes about one-tenth of the entire "Ruby." Cf. F. Tûqân, *Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih's Book on Statecraft* (Diss. Yale University 1968), for a balanced discussion of Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih's relationship to Ibn Qutaybah.

and which separate human beings from animals, the angelic nature from the beastly nature. They are the matter of the intellect, the lamp of the body, the light of the heart, and the support of the spirit.” The intellect and the imagination work together; the former in conjunction with knowledge and the latter in conjunction with the senses, in order to produce, in this sequence, memory (*dhikr*), thought (*fikr*), will (*irādah*), and, finally, action. The intellect exists through knowledge (pl. *‘ulūm*),<sup>77</sup> just as the senses exist through the sense perception they attain. “Knowledge is of two kinds, a knowledge that is carried (stored), and a knowledge that is employed (put actively to work). Knowledge carried is harmful. Knowledge employed is useful.”<sup>78</sup> It would seem, although it is not expressly stated, that *adab* belongs to the action side of knowledge. After the discussion of knowledge and scholars, Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih speaks about the intellect as well as wisdom, adding aphorisms, many of which have also something to say about knowledge. It sounds like an echo from the *‘Uyūn* when he goes on to define and analyze eloquence.<sup>79</sup> Thereafter, however, he treats a profusion of *adab* topics dealing with human emotions and behavior of a kind Ibn Qutaybah would have preferred to include in the earlier chapter on physical features and character qualities. Like Ibn Qutaybah, Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih has sections on eloquent speech and silence, on heretics and sectarians, and on grammatical problems and anecdotes. All this, however, is subordinate to the overall view of *adab* as comprising all aspects of human behavior. The various kinds of material related to language are treated by Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, in contrast to Ibn Qutaybah, at much greater length outside the chapter on *‘ilm* and *adab*. It is clear that Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih considers *‘ilm* to be something that must primarily be identified with the sciences concerned with language. *‘Ilm* appears in his work as the basis for all *adab*, as it is, we have seen, in the ethical religious view the basis of all action and in the view of the speculative theologians the basis of all theology.

It would certainly be instructive to see what elaboration this theme had found, presumably another half a century later, in the hands of the great philologist and littérateur, al-Marzubānī (d.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. below, p. 273, n. 3.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 206.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. ar-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, I, 33.

384/994). His *Kitāb Talqīh al-ʿuqūl* "The Fertilization of the Intellects" appears to have been an *adab* work, starting out with a discussion of the intellect. This is followed by chapters on *adab* and on *ʿilm*, in this order. In view of the stress the *Talqīh* apparently placed on matters intellectual, it is rather strange to find *adab* preceding *ʿilm*, but since the work is not preserved and its contents not known, it would be idle to speculate on possible reasons.<sup>80</sup>

From the end of the tenth century, we have a different type of *adab* anthology containing a special section on *ʿilm*. This is the collection of *Maqāmāt* by Badīʿ-az-zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 398/1008). It goes without saying that the *Maqāmāt* literature cannot be simply equated with the usual *adab* anthologies. In a sense, it is more like prose versions of collections of poems, but in contrast to poetical *dīwāns*, it has a coherent theme. Like *adab* anthologies, it serves to illuminate all the varieties and foibles of human behavior, usually under one particular heading at a time for each. The Badīʿs *Maqāmāh al-ʿilmīyah* is very brief. Yet, it does surprisingly well in covering all the accepted notions of the difficulties and rewards of the search for knowledge:

"Being abroad, I once heard a man asking someone else how he had obtained knowledge, and this was the reply he received: I looked for it and found it far away, not within the reach of hunting arrows, not to be obtained through divination, not to be seen in one's sleep, not to be retained with a bridle, not to be inherited from paternal uncles, and not to be borrowed from generous men. I got it by tramping through muddy soil and leaning upon rocks, by rejecting annoyance and taking risks, by the assiduous spending of sleepless nights and liking to travel, by much speculation and the application of thought. I found it to be something good only for planting, and only for being planted in the soul, an animal to be hunted that is caught but rarely and trapped only in the bosom, a bird that is deceived only by the snare of words and enmeshed only in the net of memory. I set it upon the spirit and bound it upon the eye. I spent (my) livelihood (on it) and hoarded (it) in the heart. I checked (on its accuracy) through research, and I went from speculation to the assurance of thorough understanding, and from thorough understanding to writing and authorship, relying

<sup>80</sup> The available information on the work derives from *Fihrist*, 133, ll. 6 ff. = 191.

upon the support of (divine) success. Thus, I heard words that impressed the ear, went to the heart, and seeped into the breast. I said: Young man, whence does the sun rise, and he started to say:

“Alexandria is my home, even though I do not remain there for long,  
But in Syria I spend the night, and in the ‘Irâq, my day.”<sup>81</sup>

The plethora of allusions contained in the Arabic text is perforce absent from the translation. Even so, the ceaseless hunt for knowledge, its elusive character, its conflict with material values are superbly expressed in a few words. It may be noted that the most famous of all the *Maqâmât*, those written a century after the *Badî‘* by al-Ḥarîrî, do not include a *maqâmah* devoted expressly to knowledge.<sup>82</sup> However, the *Maqâmât* of az-Zamakhsharî, which are intended mainly to illustrate the right religious behavior, have a “*Maqâmah* on Action” which, in fact, deals with the problem of the relationship between knowledge and action. It has its place between the discussion of sincere devotion (*ikhhlâṣ*) and the recognition of the oneness of God (*tawḥîd*). A man learned in grammar and all the other branches of philology may boast of his knowledge and education—*‘ilm* and *adab* are used here indiscriminately—, but the true scholar is one who uses his knowledge to gain religious merit. Strong knowledge is useless where action is slack. “Knowledge without action is like a bow without a string.” A relationship as close as blood relationship must be established between knowledge and action. Knowledge is acquired, because it is a ladder leading up to action, which is true action only if it leads to God.<sup>83</sup> The synthesis of religious knowledge and *adab* knowledge, which had been achieved by that time, is clearly observable here. It does indeed make this *maqâmah* one on action rather than on knowledge. The stress on action accentuates the dominant role of practical piety and religious observance in the society of az-Zamakhsharî’s time.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *Badî‘-az-zamân al-Hamadhânî, Maqâmât*, ed. M. Muḥyî-ad-dîn ‘Abd-al-Majîd, 312–15 (Cairo 1381/1962), ed. Beirut 1965, 202, trans. W. J. Prendergast, *The Maqâmât of Badî‘ al-Zamân al-Hamadhânî*, 152 f. (London and Madras 1915).

<sup>82</sup> Nor is there anything special on *‘ilm* in the *Maqâmât* of Ibn Nâqiyâ and the other material published by O. Resher, *Maqâmât al-Ḥanaflî wa-Ibn Nâqiyâ* (Istanbul 1330/1914, *Beiträge zur Maqamen-Litteratur* 4).

<sup>83</sup> Cf. az-Zamakhsharî, *Maqâmât*, 98–103 (Cairo 1335). In his translation, Resher correctly enlarges the heading of the chapter to read, “(Wissen und) Handeln,” cf. O. Resher, *Die Maqâmen des Zamakhsharî*, 45–48 (Greifswald 1913, *Beiträge...* 6).

Among the conventional *adab* anthologies, we encounter a somewhat different organization of the traditional material in the *Kitāb Adab al-dunyā wa-d-dīn* of al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058).<sup>84</sup> The five large chapters of the work deal with 1. the excellence of the intellect and intelligence and the blameworthiness of instinctive desire and blind prejudice (*hawā*); 2. the *ādāb* of knowledge; 3. the *ādāb* of religion (dealing mainly with the negative aspects of the material world); 4. the *ādāb* of this world; and 5. the *ādāb* of the soul. As the plural *ādāb* indicates, the various ways in which intellectual, religious, practical/material, and spiritual/ethical behavior is to be practised are illustrated by preferably brief and aphoristic statements in prose and, quite often, in verse. As is to be expected, the chapter on knowledge shows no systematic arrangement. It starts out with strong expressions of praise for knowledge and the appropriate Qur'ānic citations and statements by the Prophet and early Muslim authorities. Evidence is presented for the superiority of knowledge over ignorance. The impossibility of attaining complete knowledge is explained, and the need to acquire knowledge of all kinds wherever possible is stressed. The relationship between knowledge and material possessions is explored in the usual manner. It is recommended that the process of studying begin at an early age. Knowledge is difficult to acquire. Again, the prevalence of ignorance is discussed. The objectionable character of using knowledge for ulterior purposes comes in for customary mention. There are sayings explaining the best methods of study and instruction, the qualities students ought to possess, the need for long and strenuous study, and the drawbacks of forgetfulness. Then, we read remarks about handwriting, about the usually bad handwriting of scholars, and about their constantly being engaged in writing. Remarks on the qualifications of students, the *ḥadīth* that "good questions are one half of knowledge," and sayings about the character qualities of scholars complete the part of the work devoted to knowledge. Its predominantly secular outlook is indicated by the fact that knowledge here continues to precede the discussion of religion and ethics. The basic role conceded to

<sup>84</sup> Cf. al-Māwardī, *Adab* (Cairo 1315). A defective but rather old manuscript of the work is preserved in Manisa 1117. It was briefly mentioned but not identified in *Une Liste des manuscrits choisis parmi les bibliothèques de Manisa, Akhisar*, 9 (Istanbul 1951). Its scribe was a certain Muḥammad b. Šadaqah (al-Ḥar?)rānī, who completed his task at the end of Sha'bān 534/April 19, 1140.

the intellect with respect to both intellectual/educational and religious/ethical activity is formally acknowledged by placing the chapter on it at the beginning, as was also the case in the work of al-Marzubânî.

A similar attitude is to be found in the large *adab* anthology by ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahânî. His *Muḥâḍarât* may be dated in the opening years of the twelfth century. The general tendency is toward identifying *ʿilm* not only with *adab* but also with *ʿaql*. In his dedication, ar-Râghib speaks of the contents of the work as “polish for the understanding and substance matter for knowledge,” and this, he says, befits his sponsor’s “concern with intelligence and the protection of excellence.”<sup>85</sup> As in al-Mâwardî, the discussion of intelligence and stupidity is linked with the blameworthiness of following one’s instinctive desires and prejudices. Indicative of the possession of intelligence are such qualities as prudence, energy, cleverness, and self-reliance, as well as the skilful utilization of the intelligence possessed by others by seeking their advice. Knowledge comes next. It is likewise viewed principally as a result of intelligence and experience, a way of living a successful life. The usual topics are treated always briefly and usually according to both their good and their bad aspects. *ʿilm*, or rather, as it turns out, *adab*, is the equivalent of rank and nobility (*ḥasab*) and of wealth. This appears to favor the usefulness of knowledge for worldly advantage. But, as is customary, the use of knowledge merely for gaining material success is scored. The connection of knowledge and action is mentioned. A strange assortment of scholarly disciplines is briefly considered. In conformity with the religious claim to an exclusive title on “knowledge,” it starts out with *ḥadīth*. Then, the philological disciplines such as grammar and prosody as well as entertaining anecdotes are considered. This is followed by speculative theology and jurisprudence, and then, there come counting, riddles, and genealogy. We have here the ordinary range of disciplines with which an educated man ought to be acquainted.

Memory and forgetfulness and the writing of books are discussed, followed by paragraphs on the good and bad qualities of scholars as well as the tribulations they have to endure at the hand of

<sup>85</sup> Cf. ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahânî, *Muḥâḍarât*, I, 2. The first chapter on “The Intellect, Knowledge, Stupidity, and Related Subjects” covers pp. 5–96, of which pp. 5–16 are devoted to intelligence and related qualities, pp. 16–24 are devoted to knowledge, and pp. 24–32, to study and teaching.

ignorant persons, who by nature are hostile to the learned.<sup>86</sup> A section of equal length deals with learning and teaching in the manner of the technical educational literature. Topics discussed that take care of the student's side are the need for spreading knowledge while at the same time being selective in the choice of qualified students, the best age for studying, the merits of memorized knowledge versus written knowledge, the usefulness of asking questions and of admitting one's ignorance, the difficulties encountered in acquiring knowledge, and its great diversity. The teaching side is illustrated by remarks on the value of education (*ta'dib*), by examples of admirable instructions given by important men to teachers of the past, by anecdotes about the success or lack of success of teachers with intelligent or stupid pupils, and by statements on the bad qualities of teachers and the drawbacks of the teaching profession. Thereafter, ar-Râghib turns his attention to eloquence, speaking and keeping silent, disputation, poetry, and writing—all these, we have seen, being part of the philological side of the *'ilm* of *adab*. In fact, this also applies in a way to the concluding sections dealing with truth and untruth, keeping secrets, giving honest advice, being receptive to the exhortations of preachers, sermons and the recitation of the Qur'ân, and making use of the "Arab" disciplines of drawing conclusions from facial expression, skilful hints, various ways of divination, and popular superstitions.

All this material constitutes the first chapter of ar-Râghib's long work. He adopts the view of the precedence of *'aql* in the *'ilm/adab* scheme. More remarkable is the fact that in contrast to the older stage represented by Ibn Qutaybah and Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih, the *Muḥâḍarât* moves the discussion of these subjects to the very beginning.<sup>87</sup> The discussion of political science no longer forms the starting point. It follows upon the chapter on the intellect and knowledge, and is in turn followed by a very extended discussion of human behavior and a comparatively brief discussion of religious topics, including the views on dying and the customs connected with it. At the end, space is given to a loosely attached section on the physical world of nature and on angels, devils, and jinn as well as animals, in order to satisfy the claim generally made for *adab*

<sup>86</sup> Cf. below, p. 322, n. 2.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. also in this connection the *adab* work in the Ambrosiana in Milan described by E. Griffini, in *RSO*, IV (1911–12), 1032.

that it constitutes the blue print for a complete education in all worthwhile subjects.

The natural world makes the beginning in another, very successful and immensely popular *adab* anthology from the first half of the twelfth century, az-Zamakhsharî's *Rabî' al-abrâr*. This strikes us as making better sense than having the discussion of nature tacked on at the end. Otherwise, however, the *Rabî'* is to all appearances much less logical in its construction than ar-Râghib's *Muḥâḍarât*. Its sixtieth chapter deals with "knowledge, wisdom, *adab*, writing (books), pens, and related topics."<sup>88</sup> The precedence accorded earlier to political science appears to be reflected in the fact that this chapter is preceded by a chapter dealing with nobility, rank, leadership, and fame. However, there seems to be no precedent in the literary tradition for the immediately following discussion of raids, killings, martyrdom, the arts and implements of warfare, courage, and cowardice. There is also no discernible internal order within the chapter on knowledge itself. The topic of the relationship of *ilm* and *amal* crops up repeatedly. The material presented is expectedly more or less identical with what is found elsewhere. However, az-Zamakhsharî shows an inclination to enliven his subject with anecdotes of famous jokesters such as Muzabbid and Ash'ab. In addition to Prophetical traditions, some space is allotted to jurisprudence, in particular, that of Abû Ḥanîfah. Verses are cited rather profusely. The *adab* part of the chapter consists of remarks on grammar, writing, and books. The *Rabî'*'s lack of interest in *ilm* is understandable, but it is to some degree indicative of the comparatively minor significance of *ilm* as a theoretical concept in many *adab* works. They were satisfied with the silent assumption that *ilm* was their domain and that they were in their entirety devoted to knowledge.

The large *Tadhkirah* of a near contemporary, Ibn Ḥamdûn (495–562/1102–66), has no special section on *ilm*, as far as is known. Interestingly enough, the *Tadhkirah* pays tribute to the concern that had finally captured all Muslim intellectual endeavor by putting a chapter on religious exhortations and religious *âdâb* at

<sup>88</sup> Cf. az-Zamakhsharî, *Rabî'*, in Ms. Yale L-5, Vol. II, fols. 182b–204a, and in Ms. Fatih 3894, fols. 22a–34a. Questions concerning the original text of the work and which of the many preserved manuscripts contain it, as well as the relationship of the various abridgments to the original text and similar matters, remain to be answered.



the beginning. “Worldly” *‘ādāb* and political science are removed to second place; in this connection, we find a passage quoting al-Ma’mūn and an unidentified philosopher on the topics of the inexhaustibility of knowledge and the degrees of importance of the various scholarly disciplines as well as the need for gradual progression in studying.<sup>89</sup> Chapter thirteen of the *Tadhkirah* deals with intelligence and stupidity. This chapter, however, is unlikely to have said much if anything on “knowledge.”

This is quite clear from a later *adab* work, the *Nihāyat al-arab* of an-Nuwayrī (d. 732/1332). It, too, has no special section on *‘ilm*, but it includes brief sections on intelligence and its opposites, stupidity (*humq*) and ignorance (*jahl*). These sections make only incidental mention of *‘ilm* and its derivatives. An-Nuwayrī cites, for instance, the remark about the refractory soul’s need of knowledge and intelligence,<sup>90</sup> or the statement ascribed to Wahb b. Munabbih that a fool is not helped by his own knowledge nor can anybody else’s knowledge help him, or the definition of the speculative theologians of *‘aql* as “a designation for kinds of knowledge (*‘ulūm*) whose attainment by man assures the soundness of his commitment.”<sup>91</sup> But these sections concentrate on *‘aql* and always use the term, even though it could conveniently be replaced in most cases by *‘ilm* without any great change in meaning. An-Nuwayrī uses a different and quite scientific scheme for the arrangement of his encyclopaedic information. He starts out with the

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Ibn Hamdūn, *Tadhkirah*, in the Istanbul Ms. Topkapusaray, Ahmet III 2948, Vol. I, fol. 150b, cf. Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Tqd*, II, 207. I have not seen the thirteenth chapter. It is, I believe, not to be found in the extant volumes of the *Tadhkirah* in the set of the Topkapusaray.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. above, p. 262, n. 1.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, III, 230–37, 353–59, in particular, 232 f., 356 (Cairo 1342–1374, reprint, n.y. [1965?]).

Ibn al-Jawzī, *Dhamm*, 5, in addition to the definition of *‘aql* cited above, p. 156, n. 1, refers to three definitions of *‘aql* insisting on its connection with *‘ilm*: 1. “It is a kind of the necessary kinds of knowledge (*al-‘ulūm al-darūriyyah*).” 2. “It is a natural ability which makes it possible to attain the sciences (*al-‘ulūm*).” And 3. “It is a potency through which distinctions in preference can be made between the realities of the objects known.”

Ardashīr is credited with the remark that “the growth of intelligence is through knowledge,” cf. Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Bahjat al-majālīs*, ed. M. Mursī al-Khōlī and ‘Abd-al-Qādir al-Qutṭ, I, 534 (Cairo, n.y. [1967?]).

In connection with a statement by al-Muḥāsibī that the intellect does not belong to the *‘ulūm*, as-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt ash-Shāfi‘īyah*, II, 42, discusses al-Ash‘arī’s presumed opinion that it is a knowledge, as well as the views of al-Bāqillānī and the Imām al-Ḥaramayn.

physical world, then goes on to discuss man, animals, plants, and, finally and at great length, history. The discussion of the intellect and intelligence belongs to the world of man. There is no need to discuss “knowledge” as a natural or acquired endowment. Everything discussed belongs to the realm of natural or social science, meaning that it is *ipso facto* “knowledge.”

At the end of the development, if we can indeed speak of a development, there are works such as the *Mustatraf fi kull fann mustazraf* by al-Ibshîhî who lived in the first half of the fifteenth century. Among the numerous earlier works al-Ibshîhî says he used, he mentions in particular the *Iqd* and the *Rabîʿ*. His use of the latter work is quite apparent also in his chapter on knowledge. The religious identification of all secular learning manifests itself in an introductory chapter on the five basic pillars of Islam. Only after the necessary respect has thus been paid to the ruling force in Muslim civilization does the author consider the subject of intelligence and stupidity, making it clear that for him, the intellect ranks in importance below the duties of the religious law. There follows a chapter on the Qurʾân, and this is before the author presents his chapter on knowledge. This does not mean that he considers “knowledge” exclusively the equivalent of *ḥadîth* which would ordinarily be discussed right after the Qurʾân. Al-Ibshîhî intends to make it clear by this arrangement that as the intellect and reason come after the religious law, thus all other scholarly concerns of man should come only after the study of the Qurʾân. The full title of the fourth chapter dealing with knowledge is “On Knowledge, *Adab*, and the Excellence of Scholar/Teacher and Student.” It is in turn followed by a few pages of aphorisms and proverbs. The subsequent discussion of eloquence leads over to the main contents of the *Mustatraf*, which is the detailed treatment of the usual great variety of philological, literary, ethical, and political topics. The first four chapters occupy only a minute portion, less than five percent, of the entire work.<sup>92</sup> The six and a half large pages on knowledge and *adab* reveal a pronounced slant toward the religious meritoriousness of knowledge. This shows in the manner in which the subject of the potential faults of scholars is played down. The value of memorized knowledge is stressed, and the authorities cited in this connection are mainly religious scholars.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. al-Ibshîhî, *Mustatraf*, I, 6–29. The chapter on knowledge occupies pp. 23–29, trans. G. Rat, 52–68 (Paris and Toulon 1899).

A good deal of space is taken up with proving the unlimited extent of God's knowledge with the help of a parable of al-Khiḍr, Moses, and the sparrow, and a number of other statements. Sayings attributed in az-Zamakhsharī's *Rabīʿ* to ancient Greek authorities such as Plato, Galen, and Aristotle, are omitted, or no ascriptions are mentioned. This is also the case with regard to an anecdote on divorce which the *Rabīʿ* cites in the name of Muzabbid; the omission of the famous jokester's name completely masks the humorous character of the anecdote. A more secular outlook is preserved in the brief section dealing with *adab*. The transition from *ʿilm* to *adab* is made by remarks on correct speech, a subject, skirting both *ʿilm* and *adab*. The material usefulness and worldly advantages offered by *adab* are the main thesis of al-Ibshīhī's quotations, and in this connection, it does not appear inappropriate to him to insert statements bearing the names of Greek authorities such as Hippocrates and Galen. In his discussion of knowledge, the author adds another element not found in the earlier literature discussed here. Close to the beginning of the chapter, he has a definition of knowledge.<sup>93</sup> This shows his awareness of the role played by knowledge in speculative theology. Still, *ʿilm* remains a rather minor concept for him. His concern with impressing upon his readers the religious and morals virtues of knowledge is understandable and inevitable in the intellectual climate of his time.

The preceding discussion of some *adab* anthologies, limited as it is, will have provided a general idea of the position the concept of *ʿilm* has over the centuries occupied in the large realm of *adab*. It is correct to maintain, as did al-Ibshīhī, that "each (of the many earlier works he used in the compilation of the *Mustaṭraf*) stood alone with valuable items of information not contained in the other works."<sup>94</sup> However, there is an extensive overlapping of information, and apart from it, the choice and import of ideas are largely the same all over, even if the words differ. Only the general organization and arrangement can give some indication with regard to the specific attitude toward knowledge taken by the various authors. On this basis, it is clear that "knowledge" made occasional attempts to work its way to the top, that is, to a conspicuous position at the beginning of a given work. However, it did so neither consistently nor very convincingly. Moreover, *ʿilm* was at times almost

<sup>93</sup> Cf. al-Ibshīhī, *Mustaṭraf*, I, 23, see definition C-4, above, p. 56.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. al-Ibshīhī, *Mustaṭraf*, I, 2.

totally disregarded. In all, it must be admitted that “knowledge” had little life of its own in the *adab* literature. On the other hand, knowledge was silently acknowledged all around as basic in connection with *adab*, and it was treated as almost synonymous with *adab*, in spite of repeated attempts to nail down the difference between the two concepts.<sup>95</sup> In the *adab* view, knowledge is also closely allied with, and hardly distinguishable from, intelligence which, understood as a sort of *Lebensklugheit* or practical wisdom, became the password that opened the world of *adab*. Different shades of opinions existed here, too. For the men concerned with *adab*, the intellect certainly enjoyed precedence over knowledge,<sup>96</sup> but it was not possible, nor was the attempt made, to shake the conviction that knowledge provided the theoretical basis for all practical intelligence. Learning from life, experience, was generally thought to be the preserve of the intellect, and not that of knowledge.<sup>97</sup> In pre-Islamic times, it was often knowledge that was conceived as the sum total of numerous bits of experience.<sup>98</sup> In

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Ibn Qutaybah’s statement, above, p. 263. This statement was also quoted by aṣ-Ṣafadī, *Ghayāth*, I, 3 (Cairo 1305/1888), cf. F. Rosenthal, in *Orientalia*, N.S., XI (1942), 263.

<sup>96</sup> This was also the view of the philosophers, but it was against the innermost convictions of the religious scholars. For a religious-mystical assessment of the superiority of knowledge over the intellect, cf. the five folios contained in the Ankara Ms. Ismail Saib, I, 4120, entitled *Fī tafḥīl al-‘ilm ‘alā l-‘aql*. The manuscript was written in 704–706/1304–6. I do not know its author (as-Sulamī?). It is followed by an essay on the nobility of the intellect (by the same author?). A late essay comparing *‘ilm* and *‘aql* was al-Kāfiyaji’s *Kāfi*, Ms. Atif Eff, 2828, fols. 169b–173b.

The *‘aql* clearly was valued more highly in the widespread view that knowledge without intelligence might be harmful. “If a man’s knowledge is greater than his intelligence, he is liable to suffer harm from his knowledge,” cf. Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Bahjah*, I, 533. In particular, men of suspect religious views were often accused of possessing more knowledge than intelligence. It may be noted that in the Greek orbit, we find, for instance, Chrysostomus (?) pondering the fact that “there is knowledge (*gnōsis*) without reason (*logos*) as well as knowledge together with reason, and there are many who have knowledge but do not have reason,” cf. Antonius Melissa, 927 f.

<sup>97</sup> Cf., for instance, Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 240 ff.; al-Ibshīhī, *Mustatraf*, I, 17 f. A statement attributed to Plato in the *Kutāb as-Sa‘ādah*, 167, explains that “experience” goes with the intellect, as does action with knowledge. Similarly, in the Greek view, “experience” belonged together with wisdom, as indicated, for instance, in a saying attributed to the musician, Lasus, calling experience (*peira*) the wisest thing (*sophōtaton*) there is, cf. Antonius Melissa, 935 f., as it was also considered “the best” (*Theognis*).

<sup>98</sup> Cf. above, pp. 14 f.; Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn*, II, 191. The verse of Tarafah cited above, p. 15, is explained as referring to “wisdom,” which is hardly

poetry, this idea seems to have lived on more directly than in prose. Thus, al-Mutanabbî sang:

I have tasted the bitter and the sweet of affairs  
And walked over the rough and the smooth paths of days.  
I have come to know all about time. It cannot produce  
Any extraordinary word or any new action.

Elsewhere, he said:

I knew the nights before they affected me,  
And when they afflicted me, it gave me no additional knowledge.<sup>99</sup>

At least for the many who listened to the voice of poets,<sup>100</sup> knowledge continued to signify also something gained not through study or inspiration but through practical experience and the hard school of life. But like logic which is all about knowledge and therefore can dispense with much discussion of the concept as such, *adab* also deals with knowledge in its totality and therefore does not have to make many words about it, while being fully conscious of its dependence on it.

### 3. MONOGRAPHS IN PRAISE OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE EDUCATIONAL LITERATURE

The ambiguity surrounding the position of the concept of *ilm* in *adab* literature would make us suspect that monographs on knowledge from the *adab* point of view might not have existed at an early stage, in contrast to what was the situation with other *adab* topics. Therefore, it deserves notice that a brief essay on the excellence of knowledge (*Risâlah fî faḍl al-ilm*) addressed to Aḥmad b. Abî Du'âd (d. 240/854) is preserved in an eleventh-century manuscript.<sup>101</sup> The name of its author is not indicated. From the

correct, cf. Ishâq b. Ibrâhîm al-Kâtib, *al-Burhân fî wujûh al-bayân* (formerly known as Ibn Qudâmah, *Naqd an-nathr*), ed. A. Maṭlûb and Khadîjah al-Ḥadithî, 172 (Baghdâd 1967).

<sup>99</sup> Cf. ath-Tha'âlibî, *Yatîmah*, I, 98.

<sup>100</sup> However, we also find prose statements such as: "Experience is knowledge, and education (*adab*) is help. Dispensing with it (*adab*) is harmful to the intellect," cf. Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Bahjah*, I, 110.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Muḥsin al-Amîn al-Husaynî, in *Revue de l'Académie arabe de Damas*, XIX (1944), 74. The manuscript containing the essay is dated in 420/1029. It was used by a certain Abû n-Najib 'Abd-ar-Raḥmân b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd-al-Karîm al-Karkhî in 528/1133–34. On the basis of a copy of the same manuscript, the present whereabouts of which are not known to me, Ibn 'Abbâd's *Unwân al-ma'ârif* was published by M. Ḥ. Âl Yâsîn, *Nafâ'is al-makhtûṭât*, I (an-Najaf 1372/1953). I do not know whether it may have been part of a larger work and whether the possibility of al-Jâhîz' authorship has been considered.

available description of its contents, it would seem that its principal purpose was to glorify the written word. Knowledge, the most precious and sought after merchandise in the world, is preserved in books whose authors themselves perish, while their written works remain. What we have in this essay, therefore, is not really the praise of knowledge but an expression of admiration for the great wonder of the technique of its literary preservation which excited the *littérateurs* of early 'Abbâsîd times. In their forefront was al-Jâhîz, who was on intimate terms with Ibn Abî Du'âd and who himself is credited with a (related?) book of the same title.<sup>102</sup> The praise of books had a certain polemical sting to it. It concealed an attack against the aversion for an exclusively written fixation of their particular knowledge professed by "orthodox" religious scholars. The anonymous essay thus deals with one of the technical educational aspects of the transmission of knowledge. That the subject was soon accepted generally into the educational literature even where the stress was on memorized knowledge, is hardly surprising in view of the fact that paper made Islam a civilization of the written word to a degree not possible before.

Bibliographical indications concerning early monographs on knowledge are neither numerous nor unambiguous. Some can be assumed with some assurance to have dealt with knowledge from the religious traditionist point of view.<sup>103</sup> If a title ascribed to Wâsil b. 'Atâ', the Mu'tazilah speculative theologian, reads, "The Classes of the People of Knowledge and Ignorance,"<sup>104</sup> the subject dealt with in such a work was most probably a confrontation of Wâsil's dogmatic views with those of his adversaries. No early eighth-century monograph especially devoted to *adab* and *ilm* can be suspected here. An early Mâlikite, 'Abd-al-Malik b. Ḥabîb (d. 238/853, or 239), wrote a *Kitâb al-Wara' fi l-'ilm* "On Austerity in Knowledge." Since he is also credited with a companion treatise on "Austerity in Wealth", it would seem that he was dealing

<sup>102</sup> Cf. the Persian translation of the *Fihrist*, 308, and the biography of al-Jâhîz in Yâqût's *Irshâd*.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. above, p. 77, and, for the Shî'ah and Mu'tazilah *Kitâb al-Ma'rifah*, cf. above, pp. 146 ff. Cf. also above, p. 94, n. 1.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. the Houtsma fragment of the *Fihrist*, in *WZKM*, IV (1890), 217–35. Another fragment of the *Fihrist* mentions a *Kitâb Idâfat al-'ulûm* by a certain speculative theologian, Humayd b. Sa'îd b. Bakhtiyâr, cf. J. Fück, in *ZDMG*, XC (1936), 309. If the title is transmitted correctly, the work may have dealt with the interdependence of the various sciences, with a view to proving that their apex is constituted by speculative theology.

with educational aspects of knowledge meant to inculcate the proper attitude toward study and scholarship in the student.<sup>105</sup> The *Kitāb Faḍā'il al-ilm* "On the Merits of Knowledge" by another Mālikite, the judge of Toledo, Yaḥyâ b. Zakarîyâ' b. Muzayn (d. 259/873, or 260), was probably concerned mostly with religious knowledge, since Ibn Muzayn is also credited with a work on the merits of the Qur'ân.<sup>106</sup> And the *Targhîb fî l-ilm* "Encouragement toward Knowledge" by the Shâfi'ite, al-Muzanî (d. 264/878), almost certainly dealt with Shâfi'ite jurisprudence, the "knowledge" of the title.<sup>107</sup>

A further element of confusion comes in through the similarity in Arabic writing of *ilm* and *qalam* "pen." The fifty folios by a certain Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abî l-Aṣṣbagh, who possibly flourished in the second half of the ninth century, could no doubt have dealt with "Knowledge and the Nobility of Writing and Secretaryship," as the published text of the *Fihrist* says,<sup>108</sup> for we have seen that a discussion of knowledge might be added to that of writing; however, originally, it might rather have been "pen" instead of "knowledge." The same applies to the title of a work by Ibn Abî Sarḥ.<sup>109</sup> In the case of "The Book on Knowledge" by a certain 'Alî b. Muḥammad ash-Shimshâfi (not as-Sumaysâfi), who lived under the Ḥamdânids, the reading "knowledge" found in the edition of the *Fihrist* does indeed not appear in the edition of Yâqût's *Irshâd* where we find "pen."<sup>110</sup> Either reading could be correct. The only thing we can say is that in view of the other titles accredited to the author, it must in any case have been an *adab* work. On the other hand, "The Festivals of the Souls on Knowledge" by the philologist 'Abdallâh b. Muḥammad al-Khazzâz, who wrote under the wazîr 'Alî b. 'Îsâ and may therefore be dated approximately in the early tenth century, would seem to have been a monograph

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Ibn Farḥûn, *Dibâj*, 155. His *Kitāb al-Wara'*, now preserved in the Escorial, 5146, 6 (cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 231; Sezgin, I, 362), deals with "austerity" in practical and ethical behavior. It may well be the *Kitāb al-Wara' fî l-ilm*, *ilm* meaning traditional information, in which case it has nothing to do with the subject under discussion here.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Ibn Farḥûn, *Dibâj*, 354. For Ibn Muzayn, cf. Sezgin, I, 473.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. as-Subkî, *Ṭabaqât ash-Shâfi'îyah*, I, 238.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 128 = 184. The Persian translator of the *Fihrist* indicates preference for "pen" in all the cases mentioned.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. above, p. 77.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 154 = 220, and Yâqût, *Irshâd*, ed. D. S. Margoliouth, V. 376 (Leiden and London 1907–27, *E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series* 6) = XIV, 241 (Cairo, n.y. [1355–57]). For the author, cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 251.



on knowledge such as we are looking for here.<sup>111</sup> And the same may have been the case with “The Protection of Knowledge and the Government of the Soul” by a certain Abû l-Qâsim al-Bustî whose name and date are uncertain, although he, too, may belong into the early tenth century.<sup>112</sup> Monographs from later centuries on the excellence (*fadl*) of knowledge also do not seem to have been written in appreciable numbers, and unless they are preserved, their indicated titles leave their contents in doubt, as in the case of the work of this title appearing among the literary output of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzîyah.<sup>113</sup> In the *adab* context, there was too much incidental reference to knowledge, and the relevant material was much too familiar, to justify monograph treatment.

The educational element in the *adab* discussion of knowledge is unmistakable in a monograph entitled “The Encouragement of Seeking and Being Eager to Gather Knowledge” by Abû Hilâl al-‘Askarî.<sup>114</sup> The brief work is distinguished by the comparative originality of its contents and the author’s willingness to give his own views and comments on the sayings and stories he cites. His aim is to show that while the acquisition of knowledge calls for hard work, industriousness, and great sacrifice, the rewards both material and spiritual are worth the effort required. The two basic ideas are rather skilfully interwoven, with the principal stress on the necessity of relentless labor. Knowledge means perfection or, as the author puts it, “perfect among men is he who realizes the excellence of knowledge and then is able to study, in order to obtain knowledge,” and, as a result, to taste the sweetness of the incomparable pleasure it provides.<sup>115</sup> As far as the praise of knowledge is concerned, al-‘Askarî otherwise restricts himself to some of the more ordinary statements, such as the *ḥadīth* affirming the Prophet’s

<sup>111</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 82 = 122.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 133 = 199. The other titles listed in connection with this author seem to indicate that he was principally interested in natural science, presumably from the point of view of the philologist. He has nothing to do with the Zaydî theologian, cf. Sezgin, I, 626; S. M. Stern, in *JRAS*, 1961, 18.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. the editor’s introduction to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzîyah, *Rawḍat al-muḥibbîn*, p. *sh*, no. 50.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. al-‘Askarî, *Ḥathth*. The undated fourteenth-century Ms. Aṣir Ef. 433, contains the text on fols. 31a–49a, the Ms. Hamidiye 1464 on fols. 50a–65b. The latter has a collation note on fol. 26a, dated in Jumâdâ I 1010/1601. It looks as if the text of the work in Ms. Hamidiye extends to fol. 68b. However, fols. 66a–68b contain fragments of one or two hitherto unidentified treatises.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. above, p. 241.



permission to use flattery and show envy in connection with knowledge, or 'Alī's famous remark that a man's value consists in what he knows or does well.<sup>116</sup> Comparatively little space is given to the specific religious connotation of knowledge, although it is not entirely disregarded. At one point, it rather strangely intrudes upon the author's strong concern with literature and philology, when he quotes a statement to the effect that a student "should postpone the study of history (*akhbār*) and poetry to the time he is tired (*malal*)."<sup>117</sup> The importance and influence of knowledge are greater than that of political power (*sultān*). Therefore, the best among rulers try hardest to acquire knowledge.

Al-'Askarī gives examples of the high esteem shown to scholars and the important position in society they occupy, often in spite of their lowly origins which ordinarily would not have allowed them to advance far beyond their fathers' menial situations. Much more numerous, and more interesting, are the anecdotes and remarks on the difficulties that must be overcome on the road to knowledge. He cites the statement concerning the six qualities needed: a penetrating mind, much time, ability, hard work, a skilful teacher, and desire (or, in the parlance of our own time, "motivation," *shahwah*). On his own, he adds the very elementary need for "nature," that is, an inherited physical endowment, such as Muslim philologists of al-'Askarī's type always claimed as essential for their intellectual pursuits. The search for knowledge must be unselfish. As the author repeats over and over again, it is a never ending process. Persistent study sharpens the natural faculties. The hunger for knowledge is never stilled, as proclaimed by traditions ascribed to the Prophet. Stationariness means ultimate failure, according to the widely quoted saying that "man does not cease knowing as long as he studies, but once he gives up studying, he is the most ignorant of men."<sup>118</sup> Constant travel in search of knowledge and regular attendance at the teacher's lectures are mandatory. The prospect of learning something not known before should make a man forget his home and his family and endure all possible hardships, as illustrated by an anecdote about al-Aṣma'ī. Scholars refrain at times from certain foods as too luxurious or as harmful to the powers of memory. They study all night long.

<sup>116</sup> See above, p. 256, and below, p. 323.

<sup>117</sup> For the sentiment expressed, cf. also, for instance, Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 324.

<sup>118</sup> See above, p. 256, n. 1.

Ash-Shâfiʿi paid no attention to a slave girl given to him by friends who wants to sleep with him. Abû Ḥanîfah, asked about the manner in which memorized knowledge can be acquired, exclaimed, “Lamp oil, lamp oil” (*al-bizr al-bizr*), and a poor student later to become a famous scholar, Abû Ḥatim (as-Sijistânî?), being unable to buy lamp oil, used the watchman’s lantern to study at night in the streets. Scholars continue their studies even in the bath. They are so absorbed in their work that they do not notice what is going on around them, that they do not care to waste time on eating, that they do not bother when a hemorrhage occurs during their all-night study. In the last case, a warning note is sounded for the benefit of the reader: Studying is done for the good of one’s soul (life). If the soul is destroyed, the knowledge acquired is of no use. “Overstepping the right mean in studying may lead to the loss of knowledge.”

Again as a philologist, al-ʿAskarî uses a good deal of the latter half of his treatise to argue in favor of the superiority of memorized knowledge. In his eyes, memorized knowledge is the most difficult and, at the same time, the most useful and rewarding kind of knowledge, the kind of knowledge that swims with you when your ship sinks.<sup>119</sup> Among the many good anecdotes he reports in this connection, there is one of Abû ʿUbaydah and al-Aṣmaʿî and the caliph Hârûn ar-Rashîd. The caliph asked the two scholars to instruct him in the names of the various parts of the body of horses. Abû ʿUbaydah referred him to his book on the subject. Al-Aṣmaʿî, on the other hand, impressed the caliph favorably by asking for a horse and a pointer and pointing out the various parts.

For al-ʿAskarî, *ʿilm* is the equivalent of *adab*. He uses the two terms interchangeably, as, for instance, when he says in versifying the Prophetical tradition about the envy of knowledge: “I do not envy a man’s money, but I envy his *adab*.” It is philological knowledge that interests him most. That it is not knowledge in general, is also indicated by the very few lines devoted to ignorance and the low status of ignoramuses. Works of this type tend, in fact, to concentrate on some particular discipline rather than knowledge as a whole. Already al-Kindî wrote a work of an almost identical title where “philosophy” is substituted for al-ʿAskarî’s

<sup>119</sup> In Greek tradition, this saying was ascribed to Antisthenes or to Aristippus, cf. F. Rosenthal, in *Orientalia, N. S.*, XXVII (1958), 38.

“knowledge.”<sup>120</sup> The purpose is not merely to praise the idea of knowledge but to do the psychological conditioning essential in the process of education, to provide the incentive for the student to learn the subject or subjects he is supposed to acquire. In this sense, a treatise such as that by al-‘Askarī is part of the technical educational literature, even if it deals with a field as general and broad as *adab* education.

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The technical educational literature is again something that is devoted in its entirety to questions of knowledge. Like logic and general *adab*, it does not always have to use the term *‘ilm*, in order to indicate its concern with knowledge. It deals with the practical aspects of how to acquire and spread knowledge. It does not require any theoretical discussion of what knowledge is. All knowledge, all the individual scholarly and scientific disciplines, are subsumed under it. In addition, the ethical and psychological conditions necessary for the learning and teaching process come within its purview. All this means that there is an immense ground to be covered, with the result that individual works are able to deal only with specific aspects and view the educational process on different levels. On the highest scholarly level, we thus have the encyclopaedias which attempt to bring order into the totality of the accumulated positive knowledge of their times and to provide the student with a capsule description of the essential features of all or the main disciplines. On the highest social level, there are the educational works known as *fürstenspiegel* which attempt to distill the knowledge needed for the top layer of society. The existence and rather wide spread and popularity of both types of literature constitute another testimony to the importance of the role of knowledge in society, even if they make short shrift of any abstract theoretical concerns. For this reason, however, they require no special attention here.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Cf. *Fihrist*, 256 = 358.

<sup>121</sup> On encyclopaedias, informative surveys are M. Plessner, *Die Geschichte der Wissenschaften im Islam* (Tübingen 1931, *Philosophie und Geschichte* 31, cf. also Plessner, *Die Bedeutung der Wissenschaftsgeschichte für das Verständnis der geistigen Welt des Islams*, Tübingen 1966, *Philosophie und Geschichte* 82), and M. Plessner, *Der Oikonomikos des Neupythagoreers ‘Bryson’* (Heidelberg 1928, *Orient und Antike* 5). On *fürstenspiegel*, we have G. Richter, *Zur Geschichte der älteren arabischen Fürstenspiegel* (Leipzig 1932, *Leipziger Semitistische Studien*, N.F., 3). Fully comprehensive studies

The deep concern with education in the technical sense found expression in two different ways. A substantial number of works were written on learning and teaching in the service of the Muslim religious educational system, and there were philosophical reflections on the educational ideal and how it could be reached or at least approached. The first type is more originally Islamic. It is also earlier with respect to literary fixation, and although it continued to move along rather narrowly defined lines, it remained more productive throughout Muslim history.

The philosophical view of education entered Islam in connection with the Graeco-Arabic translation activity during the ninth century and, perhaps, the early years of the tenth century. It perpetuated its views by merging into general ethics of which it later on constituted a small part. Its brief history can be quickly summarized, as far as it interests us here.

Some inkling of a secular curriculum came to the attention of Muslims through Ḥunayn's *Nawādir al-falāsifah*. In sporadic later attempts to substitute pedagogically more suitable courses of study for the all pervasive custom of making the beginning with the Qur'ān and also often making it the end of all instruction, it is possible to recognize an echo of Hellenistic influence.<sup>122</sup>

Understandably, the philosophical view of education centers in its terminology around the terms *adab* and *ta'dib*, as these words render Greek *paideia*.<sup>123</sup> Here, *adīb* signifies the person who possesses *paideia*. He is the *paideutos*, and the absence of *adab* marks him as *apaideutos*. No monographs devoted to philosophical education appear to have been preserved. However, there can be little doubt that a short treatise such as Plato's "Exhortation on the Education of Young Men," preserved by Miskawayh,<sup>124</sup> and the commented

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are still lacking. A continuation of Richter's work, extending to later periods, would be especially desirable.

The *Kitāb Zādānfarrūkh* (*sic leg.*) *fī ta'dīb waladīh* "Zādānfarrūkh on the Education of his Son," mentioned in *Fihrist*, 315 = 438, appears to be a *fürstenspiegel* like the 'ahd literature mentioned in the same chapter of the *Fihrist*.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Ḥunayn, as translated by Rosenthal, *Fortleben*, 105, and Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal, III, 303 f.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. above, p. 200.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Miskawayh, *Jāwīdhān Khiradh*, 270–78; F. Rosenthal, in *Orientalia*, N. S., X (1941), 383–95.

Miskawayh states that he modeled his own work on the *Jāwīdhān Khiradh* of Ūshhanj, presenting it in translation. In the beginning, right after some

excerpts, most of them under the name of Plato, incorporated into the *Kitāb as-Sa'ādah*,<sup>125</sup> faithfully reflect once existing monographs. Together with the section on the education of children from the *Oikonomikos* of the Neo-Pythagorean Bryson, whose influence on later Muslim ethical discussions of education has been elucidated by M. Plessner,<sup>126</sup> these works contain the essence, of all the philosophical thought on the technical side of education known in Islam. The famous philosophical *Bildungsroman* of later times which attempts to show how mankind can acquire all the essential knowledge about the worlds of nature, mind, and metaphysics through its own intellectual powers is in no way a direct continuation of such Greek educational theory. Its origin in the problem of reason and revelation is rooted in what had become thoroughly Muslim soil. It serves to reinforce the conviction of the primacy of knowledge, but even where it deigns to admit the inevitability of societal organization, its premises require it to be totally unconcerned with educational realities actual or potential.<sup>127</sup>

The "Exhortation on the Education of Young Men" is stated by Miskawayh to have been translated by Ishâq b. Ḥunayn. However, it is very probable that it also represents the work of the same title mentioned in the *Fihrist* as having been translated by a certain Abû 'Amr Yûḥannâ b. Yûsuf al-Kâtib.<sup>128</sup> There is no good reason to disregard the statement that the entire treatise is a translation, even if it is possible that in the form in which it appears in Miskawayh, it has undergone some alterations. At any rate, these would appear to have been minor. The treatise falls into two parts. One deals with the ethical behavior to be expected in teachers. The other deals with the general precepts which a person who aspires to achieving an education and being considered educated would do well to follow. The principal task for education to accom-

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metaphysical remarks, this alleged model has statements on knowledge (and action). Graeco-Islamic, rather than Persian, provenience is obvious for this material.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. *Kitāb as-Sa'ādah*, 351–88.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Plessner, *Oikonomikos*.

<sup>127</sup> In addition to the famous *Ḥayy b. Yaqzân*, the *Philosophus Autodidactus*, of Ibn Tufayl, we now have also the *Risālah al-Kāmilīyah fī s-sīrah an-nabawīyah* by Ibn an-Nafīs, ed., trans. M. Meyerhof and J. Schacht, *The Theologus Autodidactus of Ibn al-Nafīs* (Oxford 1968), which is principally concerned with an understanding of history.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. *Fihrist* 244 = 341.

plish is the formation of character and the acquisition of good manners and ways of behavior. The setting in which the educational process can reach fruition is indicated to be a strictly organized, authoritarian, and regimented, yet egalitarian group of teachers and students. All of them must be devoted to a life of high virtue and must faithfully believe in the wisdom of the master philosopher. He shows the way, having reached his insight through constant self-examination and a never ending search for wisdom. The students who desire to enter the realm of knowledge must possess unblemished purity, for the almost holy community of learners requires them to have the highest standards of intellectual honesty and to show sincerity, humility, and modesty in all their behavior and activities. In connection with the subjects of instruction, only the training in the arts of war and in music is mentioned. This blends well with the strictly aristocratic outlook of the community of scholars. It is possible that the original text contained more information on the course of study and the subjects to be studied, but this is not very likely to have been the case. It might have been understood that except for some basic aristocratic skills, no specialized knowledge was necessary or desirable. Philosophical contemplation and a code of behavior and action suitable for dedicated intellectuals were the true goal of education.

The *Kitāb as-Sa'ādah* discusses politics and ethics and the contribution they must make to the achievement of the ultimate end of philosophy, which is the attainment of happiness. It agrees with the "Exhortation" as to the desirable goal of education. However, its concern is not only with the advanced age group considered by the "Exhortation" but also with children at the earlier stages of their education and development. Education must begin with the earliest years of childhood. The foundations must be laid early. These foundations are the firm belief that happiness and the good are achieved through obeying the laws (*sunan*) and one's elders (*akābir*), so that in encountering a law or a command (*amr*), children welcome it as warmly as if they had found something good. All education is a continuing process. It is the way to the philosophical life or, what is the same, to happiness.

The material ascribed to Plato and the comments thereon are interspersed with other quotations, mainly in the name of Greek sages. Definitions of *adab* "education," *muta'addib* "the individual undergoing education," and *adīb* "the individual who is the product

of education”<sup>129</sup> make the beginning, as one would expect in a philosophical work that among other sources of inspiration also owes much to Aristotelianism. A first-person statement, possibly-expressing the opinion of the author of the *Kitāb as-Sa‘ādah*, or rather, that of the unnamed commentator (?), defines *adab* as the human wisdom which, in turn, is the observed and considered knowledge about (*ma‘rifah*) the way of life leading to happiness. The purpose of *adab*, and here Plato is cited again, is to produce the good man who is able to refrain from physical and material pleasures and to show emotional stability in the face of joys and sorrows and all other happenings as well as remain undisturbed and inactive, except where reason and thought indicate the desirability or necessity of action. The person undergoing education and at an advanced stage of the educational process is identical with the man of reason (*nāfiq*); consequently, the absence of education is identical with the absence of reason (*nutq*). An uneducated person is like a dreamer awake—*enhyponia egrégorota*—, here cited as a dictum of Plato, whereas Greek tradition ascribes it to Antisthenes.<sup>130</sup> The education of children must be attuned to their capacity. At first, they must be playfully coaxed into acquiring knowledge and understanding. Serious thought must be presented to them in the form of play. This can be done, for instance, by instructing them in myths which are untrue and fictitious on the surface but of serious educational content.<sup>131</sup> It may take the form of poetry that praises virtue and modesty (i.e., *sôphrosynê*), as against poetry that advocates license and pleasure. As in the “Exhortation,” the serious stage of education requires purity at its very beginning, even for very young children. There ought to be an aversion to everything ugly and dirty. The “leader” (*sā‘is*), a term which plays a large role also in the “Exhortation,” must banish all ugliness from the country and expel all those who do not refrain from doing evil. Love of what is good and useful, and hatred of what is ugly or evil and harmful are the conditions for success. Bashfulness (*hayā‘*<sup>2</sup>, corresponding to Greek *aidôs*) and the avoidance of bad company

<sup>129</sup> *Muta’addib* is, however, understood not only as the person potentially ready for education, but he may also be identical with the *adib* who may be either a *muta’addib* advanced in his education or a person qualified to teach and educate others.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, no. 3. See also below, p. 320, n. 4.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Plato, *Republic* 376E–377A.

and of sloth are among the qualities strongly recommended for inculcation in the young.

The educational procedure is described next. It is important that it begins with the right principles. Constant training (*taʿwid*) must be employed to produce the proper moral and ethical habits of hard work and endurance, obedience to authority, abstinence from intoxicating beverages, disbelief in bugbears, fearlessness in the face of death, and so on. This training should follow gentle methods, and only where gentleness does not work, should severity be employed. After a brief interlude discussing the relationship between rulers and their subjects, higher education, that is, the study of philosophy, is described. Here the terms *muʿallim* and *mutaʿallim* replace the derivations from the root ʿ-d-b. The age of twenty is suggested as the one in which youths have attained the proper physical and mental development for higher studies. However, they still have to show the same respect for their teachers as do younger children. If they are unwilling, they should not be forced to study, as this would not produce desirable educational results. The training of teachers should extend over the first fifty years of their lives. After reaching adulthood at the age of twenty, they are to study the various special disciplines for a period of ten years, acquire competence in the art of disputation (*jadl*) during another five years, and then, during another fifteen years, perfect the substantive knowledge acquired before. Only then are they ready to teach, and that only if they possess the right ethical attitude. The six disciplines enumerated in the name of Plato and to be studied, apparently, in sequence are arithmetic, geometry, the geometry of solids, astronomy, music, and logic.

The following discussion of the education of women leans heavily on quotations from a “female philosopher” of apparent (Neo-) Pythagorean connections. Although the name of Plato is in general invoked by the “Exhortation” and the *Kitāb as-Saʿādah*, it is clearly Neo-Pythagoreanism with its penchant for education and for esoteric educational societies where we have to look for the Greek originals of the Arabic material. The Neo-Pythagorean origin of Bryson’s “Economics” is even less in doubt. For Bryson, too, happiness is the final goal. Since his work is concerned with what takes place within the home and the family, his section on education deals exclusively with small children and omits entirely the discussion of higher education, which as a rule took place



outside the family environment. In addition to good physical stock and native endowment, constant training with a view to implanting proper habits is the crucial task of education also for Bryson. Good manners in eating and appropriate habits of sleep are considered important. The avoidance of sexual activity is recommended. A habit of respect for one's elders, hardiness, simple tastes, and the occasional diversion of play are among the things belonging to educational training.

All the foregoing material entered the general current of Muslim thought through the devoted activities of the philosophical rear-guard of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement flourishing in tenth-century Iran. In another of his works, the *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* "On Ethics," Miskawayh based his chapter on the education of children, as he states himself, upon Bryson. Miskawayh's exposition, in turn, served as the basis for later highly influential treatments of the subject. They were included in al-Ghazzālī's *Ihyā'*<sup>132</sup> and the Persian "Nasirean Ethics" by Naṣīr-ad-dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī,<sup>133</sup> which became standard for all subsequent work. The form in which Bryson's Neo-Pythagorean ideas are restated shows rather noteworthy changes, but there is little change in the general conception. Miskawayh sees in Bryson's exposition the trustworthy guide toward all human ethical and intellectual ways and habits leading to true humanity and happiness. Naṣīr-ad-dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī has in mind more advanced studies and the choice of a craft or profession on the basis of elementary education. Neither view is alien to Bryson, but the difference in emphasis we find in the works of Miskawayh and Naṣīr-ad-dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī reflects the direction Muslim civilization had taken in the intervening years. Nevertheless, even for Naṣīr-ad-dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī, the philosophical view of education remains decisive. *Adab-paideia* is principally a function of individual and collective ethics and of societal structure. Its knowledge contents are an integral but in a way less relevant part of it.

In this last respect, the situation is quite different in the literature inspired by and dealing with religion-related education. Here, "knowledge" and the praise of it reverberate in full force from beginning to end. Legal scholars, traditionists, and also mystics

<sup>132</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā'*, III, 62–64.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. the translation of the chapter in Plessner, *Oikonomikos*, 77–100, and the complete translation of aṭ-Ṭūsī's work by G. M. Wickens, 166–80 (London 1964).

prepared monographs on education from their own particular vantage points. In their own minds at least, their ideas had general validity for all knowledge. The identification by their titles of works that are not preserved once more presents insuperable difficulties. The *Kitâb al-‘Alim wa-l-muta‘allim* by Ḥaṣṣ b. Salm al-Fazârî (Abû Muqâtil as-Samarqandî), who died in 208/823–24 rather than in 258/871–72,<sup>134</sup> was certainly a catechism, as was the famous work of the same title by Abû Ḥanîfah, if it was not indeed identical with it, al-Fazârî being merely its transmitter. When the same title appears again among the works of the prominent early tenth-century Shî‘ah jurist, Muḥammad b. Mas‘ûd al-‘Ayyâshî, in a list which seems to refer to monographs on certain points of the religious law, it may indicate a work on the laws governing teaching, uncertain as this is.<sup>135</sup> It seems impossible to venture a sensible guess as to the contents of the *Kitâb al-‘Ilm wa-t-ta‘lîm* mentioned by the author of the *Kitâb al-Bad’ wa-t-ta’rîkh* as another one of his works.<sup>136</sup> It is not likely to have dealt with the technical aspects of education.

Fortunately, the relatively early date of educational monographs is attested in the realm of Mâlikite jurisprudence.<sup>137</sup> The *Ādâb al-mu‘allimîn* “The Behavior of Teachers” by Suḥnûn’s son, Muḥammad (202–256/817–870), based on his father’s materials, is preserved.<sup>138</sup> It influenced the production of similar treatises among Mâlikites and may itself have continued what already in its time

<sup>134</sup> The title is mentioned in Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisân*, II, 323 (Hyderabad 1329–31). On the author, cf., for instance, Ibn Abî Ḥâtim ar-Râzî, *Kitâb al-Jarḥ wa-t-ta’dîl*, I, 2, 174, 187 (Hyderabad 1941–53); Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhîb*, II, 397–99, and, for his role as the transmitter of the work of Abû Ḥanîfah, cf. Sezgin, I, 418.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. *GAL*, *Suppl.*, I, 704; Sezgin, I, 42; *Fihrist*, 194 = 275. Another uncertain tenth-century Shî‘ah title is the *Kitâb Uns al-‘alim wa-t-ta’dîb al-muta‘allim* by aṣ-Ṣafwânî, cf. aṭ-Ṭûsî, *Fihrist*, 159, l. 4; *Fihrist*, 197, l. 14 = 278. Cf. an-Najâshî, *Rijâl*, 248, 280, also, 238.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. al-Muṭahhar, *Bad’*, I, 19.

<sup>137</sup> The contents of the Ibâḍite *Qaṣîdat adab al-mu‘allim wa-l-muta‘allim* is unfortunately not known to me, but unless it is a versified catechism, which is unlikely in view of the word *adab* in the title, the authorship of Aflaḥ b. ‘Abd-al-Wahhâb b. Rustam, who is placed in the first half of the ninth century, seems open to doubt. It would be by far the earliest treatment of the subject of education according to the law, and, moreover, in the form of verse. Cf. J. Schacht, in *Revue Africaine*, C (1956), 395, no. 121; Sezgin, I, 586.

<sup>138</sup> Ibn Suḥnûn’s treatise was edited by A. F. al-Ahwânî in connection with al-Qâbisî, 2nd ed., 351–67; French trans. G. Lecomte, in *Revue des Études Islamiques*, XXI (1953), 77–105.

was a tradition. It is, however, quite brief, and this would tend to indicate that it was, in fact, the first effort, or at least a very early effort, to put out a monograph on the subject of elementary teaching. Such teaching is primarily the study of the Qur'ân. Therefore, traditions in praise of the merit of teaching the Qur'ân make the beginning. The technical details of Qur'ân teaching wind through the entire treatise. They concern such matters as how to wipe clean the slates of children studying the Qur'ân or how deeply to go with them into the subject. The possibility of the teacher teaching other subjects such as counting, poetry, grammar, and philology is mentioned only in passing. The teacher's duties vis-à-vis his young charges are discussed, among them the requirement of treating all of them equally, using corporal punishment within limits only, instructing them in the religious duties of Muslims, giving the children some holidays off, and employing the right ways of supervising them. The most prominent treatment, it would seem, is reserved for matters touching on the financial status of teachers. They have various obligations such as providing for the needed schoolroom and for equipment. Questions of compensation, gifts on special occasions, and ways of earning additional income are treated at some length. It is not unfair to maintain that more than anything else, Ibn Suḥnûn's work is concerned with the economic position of teachers. From the legal point of view, this would, in fact, be the most important practical problem to be considered and to be provided with legal guidelines.

The later treatise "On the Laws Governing Teachers and Students" by the great Mâlikite authority, Ibn Abî Zayd (316–386/928–996), is known so far only from a quotation in Ibn Khaldûn.<sup>139</sup> No definite statement can be made about its contents. However, a younger contemporary of Ibn Abî Zayd and fellow Mâlikite, 'Alî b. Muḥammad al-Qâbisî (324–403/936–1012), also wrote a "Treatise Detailing the Conditions of Students and the Laws Governing Teachers and Students,"<sup>140</sup> which is preserved. It is a much longer work than Ibn Suḥnûn's compilation. It starts out

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Ibn Khaldûn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal, I, 261, III, 306. The title is not mentioned in Ibn Farḥûn, *Dibâġ*, 137. Ibn Farḥûn lists a *Kitâb Ṭalab al-'ilm*. This could be the same work, although this is by no means certain. The assumption that Ibn Khaldûn meant al-Qâbisî (cf. Sezgin, I, 481, n. 1b) is possible but cannot be proved.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. al-Qâbisî, 1st ed., 241–318, 2nd ed., 267–347. Al-Qâbisî also wrote a *Kitâb Rutab al-'ilm*, cf. Ibn Farḥûn, *Dibâġ*, 201.

with a rather extraneous chapter discussing faith, *islām*, and proper action (*iḥsān*) and straightforwardness (*istiḡāmah*) in religious life. Otherwise, there is no real difference between the two works. The prevailing impression gained from a study of al-Qābisī's work confirms the assumption that the economic concerns of the teacher were uppermost in the minds of these early Mālikite jurists when they wrote their works.

Monographs in the same spirit composed by jurists belonging to other legal schools are not preserved from these early centuries, although some no doubt existed. However, such practical problems may not have been of equal appeal for scholars of the other schools in those days, and it may not merely be the fault of sources or insufficient knowledge which leaves us without any information on relevant titles. The contents of the *Kitāb Riyāḍat al-muta'allim* "The Training of the Student" by az-Zubayr b. Aḥmad az-Zubayrī from the early tenth century cannot be determined from its title. It is not likely to have been a work on education.<sup>141</sup> In general, evidence for further legal works on education becomes available only for a much later period, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. We have rather short treatises of very limited interest, such as Zakarīyā' al-Anṣārī's (d. ca. 1511–1521) *al-Lu'lu' an-naẓīm*, which is nothing more than a list of sciences, each of them briefly defined and its usefulness indicated.<sup>142</sup> Or the *Taḥrīr al-maqāl* by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī, who died in 974/1567, which deals with elementary education and is in reality a long and interesting *fatwā* on educational and administrative problems of orphanages. As a kind of background information, the author provides an introduction considering problems of Qur'ān teaching, traditions on the merits of it, the question of remuneration for it, the use of the Qur'ān for magic spells, the danger for teachers of looking at beardless boys, and the like.<sup>143</sup> These works contribute little or nothing to illustrating the position of knowledge in Islam, nor does the educational literature of Ṣūfis as represented by the ninth-century *Adab al-ʿālim wa-l-muta'allim* of Abū Bakr al-Warrāq.<sup>144</sup> It briefly eluci-

<sup>141</sup> Cf. as-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt ash-Shāfi'iyah*, II, 224; *GAL*, *Suppl.*, I, 306; Sezgin, I, 495.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. *GAL*, *Suppl.*, II, 117. I used the Princeton Ms. 498 H (Catalogue 788). For the form al-Haytamī, cf. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. Ibn Ḥadjar.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. *GAL*, *Suppl.*, II, 527. I used the Princeton Ms. 499 H (Catalogue 789).

<sup>144</sup> Cf. the edition by M. Z. al-Kawtharī (Cairo 1358/1939); Sezgin, I, 646. The work has been listed repeatedly as one by al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī.

dates the proper religious and secular behavior and practice and is linked to Šûfism only by the person of its author. The need of *adab* in preference to *‘ilm* in the educational process was felt deeply by parents who saw their children leave home to devote themselves to religious studies of various kinds. Rather touchingly, we hear, for instance, about the mother of Mâlik dressing him in scholarly garments, putting the long hat with the turban wound around it upon his head, and sending him off with the advice to learn from the *adab* of his prospective teacher, Rabî‘ah, before learning from his *‘ilm*.<sup>145</sup>

*Hadîth* scholars such as the Khaṭīb al-Baghdâdî operated on a more advanced level in their educational efforts, and they were more concerned with the contents of their discipline than the elementary teaching of it. Still, the relationship between professor and student was an integral part of the process of the transmission of traditions, and since oral transmission as the basic procedure was hardly more than a fiction at that time, much emphasis was put on matters such as writing techniques and the production and handling of books. A good handbook on the organization of higher education in the science of traditions from the twelfth century is as-Sam‘ânî’s *Adab al-implâ’ wa-l-istimplâ’* “The Method of Dictating and Taking Down Dictation.”<sup>146</sup> Needless to say, the pervasive theme of the work was *‘ilm*, and this fact is repeatedly stressed. Later in the same century, the Spanish-Moroccan Jewish author, Ibn ‘Aqnîn, wrote interestingly on education, if not in monograph form. He inserted a long chapter on the subject in his *Tibb an-nufûs* “Spiritual Medicine.”<sup>147</sup> As is to be expected from a non-Muslim author writing in Arabic, we encounter here a somewhat different outlook. It is not merely the fact that Ibn ‘Aqnîn always establishes a relation between his views on education and Jewish religious literature, which makes his treatment different; if this were so, not much attention need be paid to it. His treatment is distinguished by a more systematic method, a greater stress on essentials, and a more comprehensive view of education as a unified process from the most elementary to the highest stages. In a way, he succinctly

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Ibn Farhûn, *Dîbâj*. 20.

<sup>146</sup> Also, “being a professor’s assistant.” Cf. above, p. 252, n. 2.

<sup>147</sup> The chapter was edited and translated by M. Gûdemann, *Das jûdische Unterrichtswesen der spanisch-arabischen Periode*, text, 1–57, trans. 43–138 (Vienna 1873, reprint Amsterdam 1968). On the much debated identity of Ibn ‘Aqnîn, cf. most recently, A. S. Halkin, in the introduction of his edition of Ibn ‘Aqnîn’s *Commentary on Canticles* (Jerusalem 1964).

combines the best practical thought of the religious-traditionist and the philosophical literature on education. In this respect, he may have been inspired by ideas current in the intellectual climate of Western Islam. His prime model, however, was obviously the discussion of the duties of students and teachers from the book on knowledge in al-Ghazzâlî's *Ihyâ'*.<sup>148</sup> Ibn 'Aqnîn speaks about the teacher, the subjects to be taught, and the student, in this order. The seven conditions for the teacher are 1. complete mastery of his subject; 2. a life of action in accordance with knowledge; 3. the acceptance of no remuneration for his teaching; 4. the treatment of his students as if they were his children; 5. a deep conviction of the excellence of knowledge and of action informed by knowledge as well as the desire to inculcate this conviction in his students and thereby guide them toward happiness; 6. kindness and patience with his students; and 7. the use of a graduated curriculum tailored to the mental capacity and the stages of development of the students. The nine conditions for the student are 1. purity of character; 2. a readiness to ask questions and a critical spirit that does not accept blindly all that he is taught, but nevertheless acknowledges the greater experience of the teacher; 3. unconcern with financial and family matters; 4. mastery at first of the principles of a given discipline and then only of its details, so as to be able to face doubts and differences of opinion, even if, at the beginning, it is better for the student to shy away from them and to trust the teacher; 5. some degree of familiarity with all the various differences of opinion, since they clarify each other (as taught in Aristotelian philosophy); 6. constant reflection on the relationship of knowledge, virtuous action, and livelihood; 7. a selfless devotion to knowledge with no ulterior motives, from which no lack of progress in his studies should discourage him; 8. a willingness to seek out a good teacher (corresponding to the Muslim travel in quest of knowledge); and 9. a great respect for the teacher, bordering on reverence. The curriculum, finally, runs the full gamut from the Jewish religious sciences to all the disciplines in the Graeco-Muslim canon of the sciences.

At about the same time, around the end of the twelfth century,

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<sup>148</sup> Cf. above, pp. 94 f. Classifications of the desirable qualities of teachers and students existed, of course, much earlier; cf., for instance, al-Aşma'î, as quoted in al-Marzubânî, *Nûr al-qabas*, ed. R. Sellheim, 128 (Wiesbaden 1964, *Bibliotheca Islamica* 23a).

although not much is known about the life of the author, the standard paean on knowledge and the teaching process was composed by a Ḥanafite jurist, az-Zarnûjî.<sup>149</sup> A small work, it gained tremendous popularity, even if a fourteenth-century scholar thought it rare (*‘azîz*) and was glad when he finally was able to secure a copy.<sup>150</sup> It was copied over and over again and frequently commented upon. Convinced that knowledge and action are the means through which the Creator has given mankind distinction and superiority over everything else in the world, and realizing that many eager students are frustrated in their desire for knowledge, because they do not know how to go about its acquisition, az-Zarnûjî has written a brief handbook for students on the basis of what he himself had learned on the subject from his teachers. Knowledge is a distinctive characteristic of man. It places Adam above the angels. There are various sciences. Some of them are useful, others are harmful. Understandably, az-Zarnûjî shows throughout a predilection for jurisprudence as the discipline most useful for the community and most highly regarded by him. The intention with which a student approaches the process of learning is as important and decisive here as in any other activity. Studying should be done for the sake of God. It is pernicious to do any studying for worldly purposes. It is imperative for the student to choose the right teacher, and he must always be intent upon keeping the right company. He must be aware of the value of asking for advice. Certain qualities are needed by the student as well as by the teacher. Students must have the deepest respect for knowledge, for their teachers, and for books. Studying is a never ending enterprise, and great and constant efforts must be spent on studying “from the cradle to the grave” (*min al-mahd ilâ l-laḥd*).<sup>151</sup>

<sup>149</sup> I have used the edition of the Arabic text by C. Caspari (Leipzig 1838). The latest translation of which I have knowledge is the one by G. E. von Grunebaum and T. M. Abel (New York 1947). Az-Zarnûjî was born around 550/1155, since he mentions as his authorities, among others, Imâmzâdeh Muḥammad b. Abî Bakr (491–573/1098–1177 or 1178, cf. ‘Abd-al-Qâdir al-Qurashî, *Jawâhir*, II, 36 [Hyderabad 1332/1913–14]) and Ḥammâd b. Ibrâhîm aṣ-Ṣaffâr (493–576/1100–1180 or 1181, cf. *Jawâhir*, I, 224). He ought to have been at least in his later teens when he studied with the Imâmzâdeh. In the case of aṣ-Ṣaffâr, it is not absolutely necessary to assume that az-Zarnûjî was born long before his death.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. ‘Abd-al-Qâdir al-Qurashî, *Jawâhir*, I, 224.

<sup>151</sup> Another similar phrase is applicable only to the accomplished scholar: *ma‘a l-maḥbarah ilâ l-maqbarah* “with the inkstand to the grave,” cf. Ibn al-Jawzî, *Manâqib al-Imâm Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, 31 (Cairo 1349).

Studying also requires great sacrifices, a rigorous training of the memory, a great measure of austerity, and a complete unconcern for worldly affairs and material well-being. Az-Zarnûjî, however, is desperately aware of the financial problems of students and the inevitable necessity of making a living. He even goes so far as to state expressly how advantageous it is for the student who wishes to be able to devote himself to his studies to have sufficient financial resources. "A rich father," he reports, was the reply of a scholar who was asked what had enabled him to attain his scholarly eminence. In general, the ideas expressed by men such as al-'Askarî and those of the scholarly representatives of religious knowledge have come together and merged in the work of az-Zarnûjî. It is slight in size and also in intellectual outlook, but it summarizes well the position of knowledge in Muslim societal thought and practice.

Of the subsequent educational literature, only one work may be briefly considered here, the *Tadhkirat as-sâmi' wa-l-mutakallim fî adab al-âlim wa-l-muta'allim* by the Shâfi'ite Ibn Jamâ'ah (d. 733/1333).<sup>152</sup> It is a systematic recapitulation of the views on higher education in the religious sciences (meaning, principally, the science of traditions), undertaken in the spirit of the Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and al-Ghazzālī and using, it seems, largely their material. The *Tadhkirah* does not deal at all with elementary education, except, perhaps, in some isolated instances such as the incidental admonition for students to sit before their professors as children do before the teacher of the Qur'ân.<sup>153</sup> By the time of Ibn Jamâ'ah, higher education had long been fully institutionalized and was centered entirely in the *madrasah*. This necessitated a chapter on the choice of the right college as well as college administration and college life.<sup>154</sup> The dependence on the written word at all levels of instruction demanded another chapter on the production and handling of books.<sup>155</sup> Ibn Jamâ'ah feels that *ḥusn al-adab*, which for him is education in the widest sense including good manners and behavior and proper methods of teaching and studying, is particularly

<sup>152</sup> Cf. the edition published in Hyderabad 1353. For the relationship of the *Tadhkirah* and al-'Almawî, *Mu'îd*, cf. F. Rosenthal, *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship*, 7 ff. (Rome 1947, *Analecta Orientalia* 24). Notice the somewhat strained effort to pick synonyms for "teacher" and "student" for use in the titles of both works.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 97.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 193 ff.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 163, ff.



important for scholars and, in fact, is their prerogative.<sup>156</sup> The introductory remarks in praise of knowledge are brief and conventional. They include the customary warning against all studying undertaken for worldly gain and not for the love of God. Ibn Jamâ'ah carefully details one by one the personal qualities required in professors and in students and the attitudes and behavior of professors toward their students and of students toward their professors. The twin fundamental qualities a professor must possess are dignity and piety. He must observe great decorum in the way he dresses and the like and, indeed, in everything he does. But he must also be properly modest. Above all, he must always remain willing to learn even from those younger and of a lower status than himself, as confirmed by the fact that "a number of the ancient Muslims used to acquire knowledge they themselves did not have from their students."<sup>157</sup> It is the professor's duty to write and to publish.<sup>158</sup> In his teaching, he must follow a suitable gradated method of instruction. He must try to overcome the bashfulness of students, test their progress from time to time,<sup>159</sup> and, in general, show concern and consideration for them and for their welfare. Students must basically possess the same qualities of earnestness and piety as professors. In all their ways, they must guard the proper decorum, particularly in class or whenever they are in the company of their professors. They must choose the right company. While all frivolity must be avoided, they ought to allow themselves some occasional recreation.<sup>160</sup> More than anything else, they must have, and show, the greatest respect for their teachers in all conceivable situations. They may harbor doubts as to the correctness of the one or other statement made by their professors, but they always ought to try to resolve such doubts in the most tactful manner. Matters of the greatest importance for students are the acquisition of proper study habits and procedures, the selection of the proper course of study, and the punctilious observance of all the minutiae of a decorous classroom behavior.<sup>161</sup>

The great interest of the *Tadhkirah* lies in all these details and in all the wise and pungent remarks on particular aspects of the

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 1 f.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 29.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 39 ff.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 52 ff.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 82.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 112 ff.

learning process. Only a complete translation could bring out its richness.<sup>162</sup> For the history of knowledge, it is interesting, though hardly surprising, to find Ibn Jama'ah fully convinced that his work holds the key to the one knowledge deserving of the name and to the only thing that is of importance to the individual as well as to society. He is fully convinced of the supreme validity of the tradition stating that "the rank of knowledge is the rank of the heritage of the prophets" and that "the scholars are the heirs of the prophets."<sup>163</sup> The ways and aims of elementary education are established and no longer need much literary discussion. The ways and aims of higher education are also no longer in doubt, although they remain of interest to scholars who like to restate them from time to time. All education, having as it does "knowledge" for its beginning and its end, serves to assure the continuity of a truly Muslim civilization and a truly Muslim society.

#### 4. MATERIALS FOR AN APPRAISAL OF KNOWLEDGE AS A SOCIETAL FORCE

Muslim authors showed a decided preference for stressing the positive role of knowledge in society. Negative factors were played down and ultimately rejected, but they were not entirely disregarded. The indispensability of knowledge for any human societal organization is obvious. We would, however, hesitate to assert without qualification that it can be usefully defined and believed in as the truly supreme force in society. An aura of utopianism clings to the powerful Platonic concept of the philosopher-king, and there is indeed reason to question whether under given human conditions, the triumph of "knowledge" could lead to the most viable of social orders. The reflections made by Muslim scholars do not resolve the quandary. A presentation of what appears to be some of the crucial features of the discussion may, however, help us in establishing the degree of insight reached by them with regard to the real or ideal position of knowledge in the material and intellectual struggle of man to organize his life.

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<sup>162</sup> In the absence of such a translation, al-Ghazzâlî's book on knowledge from the *Ihyâ'* may be consulted. As always, al-Ghazzâlî's treatment of the subject was pivotal for all subsequent discussion, but since it has been mentioned before and is easily accessible, it has been thought unnecessary to devote more space to it here.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 27, 48.

*The Attitude Toward Doubt*

It has been said that the Greek religious view of the world was dominated by the antithesis of knowledge of the Gods and the lack of such knowledge, whereas the Christian antithesis was that of faith and doubt.<sup>164</sup> In Islam, both views contend with each other. However, even more than ignorance, doubt suffered from the stigma of religious connotations from which it was never able to free itself.

There are several words for doubt in Arabic, but *shakk* became the accepted technical term. *Shubhah* is also much used, and it is the favorite legal term for suspicion and indecision as to the legality of a given view or activity. *Shubhah* presents no real difficulty for its derivation from the Arabic root *sh-b-h* in its common meaning of being alike or similar; it is the similarity of two sides, of two possible answers, that leads to two-sidedness or ambiguity and the resulting attitude of doubt.<sup>165</sup> Another word, *rayb*, is easily etymologized through its occurrences in other Semitic languages such as Hebrew *riḅ* "strife"; the transition from strife, quarrel, being disturbed, and the like, to doubt is easily explainable (there is no quarrel concerning something = there can be no doubt concerning it). However, in the case of *shakk*, we are at a loss for a plausible etymology which could give us some insight into the psychological dimensions of the Muslim attitude toward doubt. The Arabic root has been connected with Hebrew *s-k-k* (= [?] *ś-k-k*) "to cover, to weave together (for screening purposes)," hence, to be complicated, to be stuck on something.<sup>166</sup> The root combination of sibilant followed by a doubled *k* or *g* in Semitic languages

<sup>164</sup> Cf. H. Dörrie, *Emanation*, in K. Flasch (ed.), *Parusia...Festgabe für Johannes Hirschberger*, 130 (Frankfurt a. M. 1965).

<sup>165</sup> 'Alī is credited with the curious statement that *shubhah* is so called because it resembles (*tushbih*) the truth, cf. *Nahj al-balāghah*, 97; Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd, I, 481. For the alleged difference between *shakk* and *irtiyāb*, cf. al-'Askari, *Furūq*, 80.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. S. Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen*, 90, n. 2 (Leiden 1886). Fraenkel's suggestion was noted with hesitant approval in the sixteenth edition, prepared by F. Buhl, of Gesenius' *Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, 543a (Leipzig 1915). It was implicitly rejected by L. Koehler, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros*, 657a (Leiden 1951). It may be the same root, with the somewhat altered meaning of "to penetrate, to intermingle," that was used by Muslim philologists to derive the meaning of "doubt," cf. al-'Askari, *Furūq*, 79: "*Shakk* 'doubt' comes from *shakakta* something if you combine it with something you insert into it. Doubt is the combination of two things in the mind."

expresses other concrete meanings that may be connected with “doubt.” The closest correspondence in meaning appears in Hebrew *sh’gāgāh* “error,” but the phonetic correspondence is somewhat remote. A combination with the root *w-sh-k* is not entirely excluded. Since the connotation of *w-sh-k* seems to focus on the idea of quickness, “doubt” may be something like rashness, instability, going astray. This would tally with the suggested derivation of *’ilm*.<sup>167</sup> However, there is also the more appealing possibility that *sh-k-k* is a secondary root to be combined with Hebrew *ś-k-h* “to look (at something, either expectantly or apprehensively),” Syrian *sakkā* “to hope,” Arabic *shakā* “to complain.” This would provide a perfect parallel to Greek *skeptikos*.<sup>168</sup> But maybe, it is just too perfect to recommend itself to the skeptical linguist.

Doubt in whichever way indicated became the true pariah and outcast of Muslim civilization. It stands for all that is to be shunned like the plague. No worse fate can befall man than being tossed into the sea of doubts and left there to flounder and possibly to drown. Doubt in itself is a sufficient manifestation of ignorance.<sup>169</sup> It was unthinkable for the Prophet to harbor even the slightest of doubts. Therefore, when he said, “I am more liable to doubt than Ibrāhīm,” it could mean only that since the Prophet had no doubts, Abraham is even less likely to have had any doubts.<sup>170</sup> The *ḥadīth* occurs in connection with Abraham’s implied doubting of God’s ability to revive the dead (Qur’ān 2:260/262). The Qur’ānic passage naturally worried the commentators a good deal. According to az-Zamakhsharī, “necessary knowledge” admits of no expression of doubt, as against “knowledge arrived at through deduction,” which does.<sup>171</sup> Ibn Ḥajar explains that doubt as understood in logic is incompatible with prophethood, but there is another kind of doubt which may be described as “unconfirmed ideas” (*al-khawāṭir allatī lā tathbut*); such doubt could occur to prophets such as Abraham.<sup>172</sup>

The principal weapon of heretics and unbelievers in their perpetual

<sup>167</sup> Cf. above, pp. 10 ff.

<sup>168</sup> Arabic *n-ẓ-r*, *naẓar* is also used to indicate that something is a matter of debate.

<sup>169</sup> *Kafā bi-sh-shakk jahlm*, cf. az-Zamakhsharī, *Mustaqṣā*, II, 167 (Hyderabad 1381/1962). Cf. also above, pp. 169 f.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. *Concordance*, III, 166a1 ff.; Ibn al-Athīr, *an-Nihāyah fī gharīb al-ḥadīth*, II, 252 (Cairo 1322), and *Lisān al-‘Arab*, XII, 337, s.v. *sh-k-k*.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. az-Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, I, 282.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Fathī al-bārī*, VII, 221 ff.

fight against the verities of Islam was the planting of doubt. Ibn al-Muqaffa' added "Burzôê's Introduction" to *Kalîlah wa-Dimnah*, in order to cause Muslims of weak faith to doubt Islam and to make them an easy prey to Manichaean propaganda.<sup>173</sup> Šâlih b. 'Abd-al-Quddûs, one of those suspected of being a Manichaean (*zindîq*), is said to have grieved about his dead son, because the latter's death had made it impossible for him to read Šâlih's "Book of Doubts" which made the reader doubt everything.<sup>174</sup> In the early tenth century, ar-Râzî possibly thought that he was stressing the positive character of his research if he used the title of "Doubts" concerning Proclus or Galen.<sup>175</sup> But much later, it was a witty way of striking a devastating critical blow to call the *Tâ'îyah* of the controversial mystic, Ibn al-Fârîdî, which had the title of *Naẓm as-shulûk* "The Mystic Path Versified," by the slightly-changed title of *Naẓm ash-shukûk* "Doubts Versified."<sup>176</sup> Whether engendered through human mischief or innate Satanic weakness, doubt was man's mortal enemy, depriving him of the certainty that his religion was intended and equipped to give him. If a troubled individual looked for a savior from error, as al-Ghazzâlî did in his spiritual autobiography, it was a search for deliverance from all nagging doubts and uncertainties.

Greek logic and philosophy taught its Muslim followers to think about doubt and to take it in stride as an ineluctable, if regrettable, stage of the dialectic process. Some information on the existence of an ancient philosophical school professing skepticism filtered down to the Muslim Middle Ages. Known as *al-Mâni'ah*, a translation, via Syriac *kâlôyé*, of *Ephektikoi*, one of the Greek designations for the Skeptics, it was defined as "a group which hindered and prevented people from (acquiring) knowledge." Its attitude toward knowledge was rather lengthily and, in a way, dispassionately

<sup>173</sup> Cf. al-Bîrûnî, *India*, ed. E. Sachau, 76 (London 1887) = 123 (Hyderabad 1377/1958), trans. E. Sachau, I, 159 (London 1910); P. Kraus, in *RSO*, XIV, (1934), 14 ff.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. the entry on Abû l-Hudhayl al-'Allâf in the *Fihrist*, Persian translation, 295, also in the Houtsma fragment.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. the bibliography of ar-Râzî by al-Bîrûnî, *Risâlah*, ed. P. Kraus (Paris 1936). For the preserved "Doubts concerning Galen," cf. S. Pines, in *Actes du VII<sup>e</sup> Congrès International d'Histoire des Sciences*, 480–87 (Paris 1953); M. Mohaghegh, in *Majallê-i-Dânishkade-i-Adabîyât wa-'Ulûm-i-Insânî*, XV, (1967), p. 10 of the reprint. Cf., however, Ḥamid-ad-dîn al-Kîrmânî, *Râḥal al-'aql*, 363 f.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Ibn Taymîyah, *Naqḍ al-mantiq*, 62.

discussed. The discussion of Skepticism, however, did not make use of the term “doubt” and therefore contributed only indirectly to the frequent warnings against the futility and perniciousness of doubt.<sup>177</sup> The speculative theologians<sup>178</sup> attached the label of “Sophists” to the representatives of epistemological skepticism. The problem of doubt as such was little involved here,<sup>179</sup> but the horrified condemnation of the Sophists’ stand applied just as well to the mortal danger caused by doubt. The views ascribed to the Sophists were thought so outrageous and impossible that it was seriously suggested, apparently by some traditionist religious scholars, that the Sophists were an invention of the speculative theologians in their efforts to undermine the simple true faith of Islam.<sup>180</sup>

The speculative theologians did ponder the problems of doubt as one of the opposites of knowledge. They did so with a view to the particular doubt in the existence of God. The concept was defined, and the conditions governing its incidence (*aḥkām*) were discussed with all the customary subtlety. One of the ideas suggested in

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Abū l-Faraj b. aṭ-Ṭayyib, *Commentary on the Categories*, in Ms. Cairo ḥikmah 1m, fol. 3a–b. This passage is more detailed than the well-known brief enumeration of Greek philosophical schools mentioned by (Ḥunayn and) al-Fārābī, in F. Dieterici, *Alfārābī's philosophische Abhandlungen*, text, 50, trans., 84 (Leiden 1890–92), cited, in the subsequent literature, by Ṣaʿīd al-Andalusī, *Ṭabaqāt al-umam*, ed. L. Cheikho, 32 = 35 (Cairo, n.y.), trans. R. Blachère, 74 (Paris 1935), and al-Qifṭī, ed. (A. Müller and) J. Lippert, 25 f. (Leipzig 1903). For Ḥunayn, cf. K. Merkle, *Die Sittensprüche der Philosophen*, 37 and 52 (Leipzig 1921). For the Syriac Pseudo-Olympiodorus, cf. G. Furlani, in *RSO*, VII (1916–18), 135 f., 139 f., where briefer Syriac notices are mentioned.

On the subject of Skepticism in Islam, cf., above all. S. Horowitz, *Der Einfluss der griechischen Skepsis auf die Entwicklung der Philosophie bei den Arabern* (Breslau 1915, *Jahres-Bericht des jüdisch-theologischen Seminars . . . für das Jahr* 1914). See also J. Kraemer, *Ḥawl al-falsafah ash-shakkīyah al-ʿarabīyah*, in Ṣalāḥ-ad-dīn al-Munajjid (ed.), *al-Muntaqā min dirāsāt al-mustashriqīn*, 209–24 (Cairo 1955). Kraemer stresses the religious foundation and orientation of Muslim skepticism, as contrasted to the secular skepticism of the West.

<sup>178</sup> With regard to the Sophists, the philosophers in Islam may have followed the lead of the speculative theologians, rather than *vice versa*. For a philosopher's condemnation of the Sophists, cf., for instance, al-Fārābī, *Ḥiṣṣa' al-ʿulūm*, 23 ff., where their attitude is viewed in a completely negative light. Al-Kindī also wrote against them, cf. *Fihrist*, 256, 259 = 358, 362.

<sup>179</sup> According to ʿAbd-al-Qāḥir, *Uṣūl*, 6 f., the Sophists fall into three groups, of which the first denies all reality and knowledge, and the third assumes that belief creates reality. The middle group are “the people of doubt” who profess agnosticism with regard to the reality of things.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. ar-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, I, 44.

this connection concerned the possible obligation to entertain doubts with regard to minor secondary problems left to independent judgment (*al-furū' al-ijtihādīyah*). However, the view of Abū Hāshim (al-Jubbā'ī) and, supposedly, Abū Bakr (al-Bāqillānī) that doubt concerning God is obligatory, because logical speculation which customarily has doubt as its starting point is necessary (*wājib*), is considered subject at least to the qualification that it is not something about which man could have initially the power of decision. On the other hand, it is not impossible that he is under the obligation to continue doubting, because he has the power to decide to remove doubt through logical speculation, and it is, indeed, obligatory, because man is required to gain knowledge of God (which presupposes that at some stage, he does not have such knowledge, and doubting is the first step toward it).<sup>181</sup> But apart from all such subtle reasoning, the common belief was that necessarily and simply, doubt in God was unbelief.<sup>182</sup>

For a brief while, and with some lingering aftereffects, a more positive appreciation of the possible benefits of a skeptical approach marked by doubt found hesitant expression. The doubting attitude attributed to eighth-century figures such as Ibn al-Muqaffa' and Ṣāliḥ b. 'Abd-al-Quddūs resulted from sincere attempts to bolster or, at worst, to replace traditional Muslim beliefs through rational, critical methods. To the glory of the Mu'tazilah, it can be said that within their ranks, there existed convinced champions of doubt, as evidenced by a noteworthy passage from the *Kutāb al-Hayawān* by al-Jāḥiẓ.<sup>183</sup> In connection with the need of scientists to be skeptical of all transmitted information and to check it always with all the means at their disposal, al-Jāḥiẓ speaks of the more general applicability of the critical scientist's attitude to the problem of cognition as such, citing the opinions of contemporaries of his, among them the great an-Nazzām:

"Recognize the occasions and situations necessitating doubt, so

<sup>181</sup> Cf. al-Āmidī, *Abkār*, in Ms. Aya Sofya 2165, fol. 13b (cf. above, p. 228). Cf. also Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī, in 'Abd-al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, XII, 185, 501 ff. The *Mughnī* expectedly offers throughout much information on the attitude of Mu'tazilah theologians toward doubt.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Kātib, *Burhān*, 102. See above, p. 135, n. 2.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. al-Jāḥiẓ, *Hayawān*, VI, 10 f. = VI, 35–37 (Cairo 1363/1944); Horowitz, *Skepsis*, 15, n. 30. It would not be an argument against al-Jāḥiẓ rather favorable attitude toward the skeptical approach that his work begins with the words, "May God remove doubt (*shubḥah*) from you."

Cf. the translation of the passage by C. Pellat, *Arabische Geisteswelt*, 281 f.

as to be able to recognize the occasions and situations necessitating certainty, and do study the doubts applicable to the doubtable. Were this to lead merely to realizing (the need for) hesitation and then to assurance, it would be something that is needed.

Realize further that all (scientists) are of the opinion that there are degrees of doubt. They are not agreed on (the existence of) degrees of strength and weakness in certainty.

When Abû l-Jahm said to al-Makkî,<sup>184</sup> 'I hardly have doubts,' al-Makkî replied, 'I hardly have certainty.' Al-Makkî wanted to show that he felt superior to (Abû l-Jahm), because he had doubts when doubts were called for, whereas Ibn al-Jahm wanted to show that he felt superior to (al-Makkî), because he had certainty when certainty was called for.

Abû Ishâq (an-Nazzâm) said: I have had disputations with both doubters and deniers among heretics,<sup>185</sup> and I have found that the doubters have a better insight into the essence of theological speculation (*kalâm*) than the deniers. Abû Ishâq also said: The doubter is closer to you than the denier. Never has there been any certainty, unless there was doubt before. Nor did anyone ever switch from one belief to another without an intervening situation of doubt.

Ibn al-Jahm said: I truly long for the conversion (that falls to the lot) of those beset by uncertainty (*mutahayyir*). For when uncertainty has cut off a man from certainty, the lost thing he goes after (successfully) is clarity,<sup>186</sup> and he who finds what he has lost rejoices...<sup>187</sup>

The common people have fewer doubts than the elite, because they have no hesitation with regard to believing something to be true (or false), and they do not doubt themselves. They see no other choice except absolutely believing something to be true or absolutely believing something to be false. They exclude the third

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<sup>184</sup> Abû l-Jahm is apparently identical with Ibn al-Jahm, as he is called later on. He was Muḥammad b. al-Jahm, the brother of the famous poet, 'Alī. Muḥammad al-Makkî is frequently cited in al-Jāhīz and other works by al-Jāhīz as one of his friends, cf. the translation of the *Livre des avarès* by C. Pellat, 342 (Beirut-Paris 1951).

<sup>185</sup> This refers to the existence of God. Another reading: "with doubters and heretics," would remove the doubters from the category of heretics.

<sup>186</sup> The variant reading "certainty" seems more to the point, but the more difficult "clarity" deserves preference. The difference between the two words in Arabic writing is very small.

<sup>187</sup> The two statements that follow here have no apparent connection with the subject of skepticism.



possibility, that of doubt, which comprises the various degrees of doubt, according to the presence or absence of suspicion with regard to reasons for (taking or not taking a doubting attitude) and according to the various measure of likelihood.

A man with some experience in speculative thought heard scholars approve of some doubt. He extended this (attitude) to everything and finally assumed that the truth or untruth of every thing is knowable (not absolutely but) only according to a varying measure of likelihood. This man died, leaving no offspring nor anyone following his method. If I mentioned his name in this connection, I would do no wrong. But presently I do not like to mention with praise<sup>188</sup> someone who partook in the dignity of *kalâm* and shared with the others the name of *mutakallim*, especially one who held the opinion of the precedence of *istiṭāʿah*."

For al-Jāḥiẓ who reported this discussion, and others whose lifetime fell into the period from the early eighth century to the middle of the ninth century, *shakk* obviously showed the way toward a well founded understanding of scientific data as well as the religious phenomena which were their prime concern. The aforementioned discussion of later speculative theologians on the applicability of doubt in connection with the existence of God contains echoes of this Muʿtazilah attitude. These men belonged among those who like Robert Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra* exclaimed, "Rather I prize the doubt," considering it an instrument of intellectual vitality and growth. It would be unfair to deny them recognition and admiration for having seized upon the most effective approach to intellectual progress. Unfortunately, they chose, if they had a choice in this matter, the metaphysical realm for the testing ground of their ideas. The very fact of their faith in doubt as a means toward true religious faith all but obliterated their memory.

A longer lasting witness to a hesitant recognition of the effectiveness of doubt is a saying ascribed to a Greek scholar known as *ʿUlynws*: "Asked why he was always professing doubt, he replied: In defense of certainty (*dhabb<sup>am</sup> ʿan al-yaqīn*)."<sup>189</sup> The remark occurs within a small group of sayings of which one can be securely related

<sup>188</sup> "Blame" would be easier; but al-Jāḥiẓ seems to mean that he wants to forego here praising something that others might find deserving of blame.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. Abū Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī as-Sijistānī, *Šiwān al-ḥikmah*, in the Istanbul Mss. Murad Molla 1408, fol. 52a, Beşir Ağa 494, fol. 57b, and Fatih 3222, fol. 39b.

to a Greek prototype.<sup>190</sup> Notwithstanding the absence of decisive proof, it is likely that the idea expressed by *ʿIlyaws* derived from Greek wisdom literature. This assumption is hardly refuted by the fact that the same remark, with only the replacement of *dhabb<sup>m</sup>* by the synonymous *muḥâmât<sup>m</sup>* but in the same question-and-answer form, appears in the *ʿUyûn* of Ibn Qutaybah where it is ascribed to an ancient Muslim transmitter of traditions, Raqabah b. Maşqalah (or Maşqalah), whose death is placed in 129/746–47.<sup>191</sup> Both the authority to which it is ascribed, and the setting in which it occurs, make it likely that the remark was understood to mean nothing more than that a wary skepticism is indicated with respect to the acceptance of material transmitted as Prophetic traditions. General wariness as part of the prudent behavior of intelligent persons is also considered by ar-Râghib al-Işfahânî as the meaning of the remark.<sup>192</sup> His *Muḥâdarât* include a brief chapter entitled “Praise, and Blame, of Doubt and a Suspicious Attitude (*sûʾ az-ẓann*).” It contains a versification of the remark by a certain Abû Muḥammad al-Khâzin:<sup>193</sup>

My doubting, even if I do much of it, is merely  
Protection for things that are certain.

Ar-Râghib further quotes the statement of an unnamed authority to the effect that “the comfort of certainty is obtained through the discomfort of doubt.” For the rest, he dwells on the need for skepticism before engaging in an undertaking or putting one’s trust into another individual. The interpretation given to the remark on doubt leading to certainty by a succession of Muslim scholars plays down its significance. Still, in its origin, it would seem to have been a strong endorsement of the value of skepticism in the search for knowledge, and its force may occasionally have been felt.

As *shakk* “doubt” was contrasted with *yaqîn* “certainty” and *ʿilm* “knowledge,” so was *ẓann* “guessing, guesswork.” The little esteem expressed for *ẓann* in the Qurʾân 53:28/29 was not universally shared later on, nor was the absolute unacceptability of *ẓann*

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Rosenthal, *Fortleben*, 366, n. 36.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *ʿUyûn*, II, 139; Ibn ʿAbd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 216.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. ar-Râghib al-Işfahânî, *Muḥâdarât*, I, 12 f.

<sup>193</sup> Is he to be identified with Abû Muḥammad al-Hizâmî, one of the stingy individuals mentioned by al-Jâhiz in his book on the *bukhalâʾ*? In this case, the verses would originally have been intended as facetious.

in the science of *ḥadīth*<sup>194</sup> generalized and extended to other fields. Some guessing was even hailed as being equal to certain knowledge.<sup>195</sup> Ptolemy is credited with the remark that “guessing is the key to certainty.”<sup>196</sup> Plato is represented as having said that “guesses are the keys to certainty, and visualizing things in the imagination provides the introduction to clarity.”<sup>197</sup> Another remark ascribed to Plato is added: “If you have doubts about something, leave it alone and act in accordance with what you do not have doubts about.”<sup>198</sup> Doubting (*irtiyāb*) certainty is sufficient information for you, and guessing gives you enough clarity.” The aphorism of “guessing being the key to certainty” was transformed into a verse by a poet who in one source remains anonymous and in another, is called Saʿīd b. Ḥumayd.<sup>199</sup> The poet’s direct model is claimed to have been: “Sound guessing is the beginning of certainty.” In the form, “guesses are the keys to certainty,” the idea is presented as a common saying in the *ʿUyūn*,<sup>200</sup> but it was even attributed to Ardashīr.<sup>201</sup> The *Iqd* cites the caliph ʿUmar to the effect that “he who does not benefit from his guesses does not benefit from his certainty,”<sup>202</sup> and also reports the saying that “an intelligent man’s guesswork is divination.”<sup>203</sup> Although Muslim authors tend to bracket *shakk* with *ẓann*, the terms hold approximately the same difference in meaning as do its English equivalents. While skepticism implies a fundamental attitude, guessing involves scientific methodology and does not reveal much about the attitude toward knowledge in a given society.<sup>204</sup>

It ought to be added here that the science of *ḥadīth* encouraged

<sup>194</sup> Cf. *Concordance*, IV, 87a30 ff.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. the verse cited in Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Kātib, *Burhān*, 92. Cf. also ʿAbd-al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, XI, 204, and *passim*, on the proposition that “preponderant opinion (*ghalabat az-ẓann*) takes the place of knowledge.”

<sup>196</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, 255. For Greek equivalents of *ẓann*, cf. p. 200.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. *Kutāb as-Saʿādah*, 420.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. the well-known *ḥadīth*: “Leave the things that puzzle you for those which do not puzzle you.”

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *ʿUyūn*, I, 35, and Ibn ʿAbd-al-Barr, *Bahjah*, I, 419. For Saʿīd b. Ḥumayd al-Kātib, cf. *Fihrist*, 123 = 179, and the indexes to such works as Ibn ʿAbd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, and *Aghānī*.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *ʿUyūn*, I, 35.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Kātib, *Burhān*, 91 f.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. Ibn ʿAbd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 242.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Ibn ʿAbd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 244; Ibn ʿAbd-al-Barr, *Bahjah*, I, 419, who has “wise man”.

<sup>204</sup> For a statement on the difference between *shakk* and *ẓann*, cf. al-ʿAshkarī, *Furūq*, 79.

a critical, doubting spirit for its technical aspects, and this approach spilled over into other fields such as the methodology of historiography.<sup>205</sup> But after all has been said, the fact remains that doubting as an epistemological tool and, even more so, as a way of life was banned from Muslim society. The expression “no doubt” which was much used in medieval Arabic was quite frequently an emphatic and meaningful assertion that everything was all right, rather than the hesitant equivocation it almost always implies in our modern usage. One scholar could compliment another by saying that “I like your doubt better than my certainty,”<sup>206</sup> in order to indicate the sure grasp of his knowledge which made doubts insignificant by comparison. Sectarians (*ahl al-hawâ*) were beset by doubt, something that brought them into being in the first place, and they were always disunited and lacked the monolithic strength that held the Muslim community together.<sup>207</sup> Doubt was not prized, except by the few who by and large remained silent, or were silenced. In contrast to the belief of Xenophanes at the very beginnings of Greek philosophy,<sup>208</sup> certainty (*al-yaqîn* = *to saphes*) with regard to matters divine and everything else did exist for Muslims and was apparent to man. Knowledge not affected by doubt was passionately believed to be within the easy reach of every believer. What this meant for the history of knowledge in Muslim society need not be spelled out for the modern Western observer.

### *Limitations on Individual Knowledge*

Doubt in the existence of knowledge and in man's ability to acquire it and make it useful for his purposes was not generally tolerated. However, the extent to which man as an individual was able to master the vast amount of knowledge in the world was another matter. In this respect, the prevailing mood was a moderate degree of realistic pessimism. Scholars learned in a given discipline

<sup>205</sup> Cf. al-Îjî, in Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 201 ff.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyûn*, II, 139; Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *‘Iqd*, II, 217. Ibn Qutaybah has: “. . . than the certainty of seven (scholars),” or is *sab’ah* “seven” a mistake of the editor or the printer and should it read *Shu’bah*, “Shu’bah’s (i.e., my own) certainty”? Cf. also Abû Nu‘aym, *Hilyah*, VII, 212.

<sup>207</sup> Cf., for instance, Ibn Taymiyah, *Naqd al-mantiq*, 42 f. *Hawâ*, the arch-enemy of reason, was also mentioned as a cause of doubt, for instance, by Baḥyâ, *Hidâyah*, 233. For the corresponding view expressed by Paul the Persian, cf. above, p. 99.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. Diels, *Vorsokratiker*, I, 64, Xenophanes B 34, and, for the use made by the Skeptics of this passage, cf. Diogenes Laertius, IX, 72.

or in a number of disciplines occasionally thought of themselves as complete masters of all the knowledge in their respective fields, or were thought by others to be. Considering the limited state of development reached by many disciplines in the Middle Ages, this may often have been not all too far from the truth. However, the production of knowledge was viewed as a continuing process where the former generations always left much to do for the later ones,<sup>209</sup> and it was pointed out already by al-Jāhiz,<sup>210</sup> as it was later on by Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr,<sup>211</sup> that the prevalence of the opposite view that the early scholars had left nothing to be done for later scholars was harmful to scholars and scholarship. The totality of knowledge was known only to the totality of men,<sup>212</sup> even if Muslims were customarily inclined to make an exception for the Prophet (and, perhaps, the Shī‘ah imāms) and flattery was often expressed in a verse saying that God cannot be reproached for having concentrated the whole world in one person. The limitations of individual knowledge in certain well developed disciplines and vis-à-vis the totality of the constantly growing accumulation of knowledge were obvious, and the social significance of this fact was realized. While intelligence is a human characteristic and potentially active in every human being. Ibn Ḥazm’s view that most people were stupid and that the number of intelligent men was very small<sup>213</sup> was probably shared by the majority. The remedy was education, but obviously, society as a whole was not prepared to spread education widely enough to cancel the factual truth of Ibn Ḥazm’s observation. As we have seen, education had to be a continuous process through-

<sup>209</sup> *Kam taraka l-awwalu li-l-ākhirī*. Disapproval was indicated by as-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt ash-Shāfi‘īyah*, I, 113. Cf. also Rosenthal, *Technique and Approach*, 63b, and *id.*, in *Osiris*, IX (1950), 559 f.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Yāqūt, *Irshād*, VI, 58 = XVI, 78.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jāmi‘*, I, 99.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. al-Māwardī, *Adab*, 42. A verse of the *Mahābhārata* says: “No one knows everything; no one is omniscient. Never is knowledge in its entirety concentrated in one person,” cf. L. Sternbach, in *JAOS*, LXXXIII (1963), 65a.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Taqrib*, 180. Cf. also the saying ascribed to Ptolemy: “Scholars are strangers, because of the great number of ignorant people,” cited by Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, *Ādāb*, ed. I. Y. Krachkovsky, *Izbrann’e sochineniya*, VI, 51 (Moscow-Leningrad 1955–60); al-Māwardī, *Adab*, 23; al-Mubashshir, 252; also Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jāmi‘*, II, 120. In a way, the famous *ḥadīth* that “knowledge begins as a stranger and ends as a stranger” (cf. above, p. 97), embodies the same idea. For the general identification of the ‘*ammah*, the common people, as the ignorant and stupid majority, cf. also Badrī M. Fahd, *al-‘Āmmah bi-Baghdād fi l-qarn al-khāmīs* (Baghdād 1387/1967).

out the lifetime of the individual. Both the vastness of knowledge and the natural dynamics of the process of learning required that it never stopped. If a Ṣūfī pointed out that it made as little sense for a warrior to spend all his life equipping himself as it did for a scholar to gather knowledge, he referred to the need for action.<sup>214</sup> He did not wish to imply that the search for more military equipment or for better knowledge should ever stop, but he felt that it was not possible for any single human being to wait for its completion, before he put his accomplishments to use. The saddest moment in the life of a philosopher such as Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Lawkarī came when he realized that old age and physical debility made it impossible for him to go on learning and add to his knowledge.<sup>215</sup>

We often hear scholars castigate the “compound ignorance” defined as a person’s not knowing that he does not know. Human failure with regard to the possession of comprehensive knowledge was most commonly and universally acknowledged by the constant repetition of the command to admit one’s ignorance, if such was the case. “Saying, ‘I do not know,’ constitutes one half of knowledge” is both a Prophetical tradition and a saying found in Graeco-Arabic wisdom literature.<sup>216</sup> The phrase most widely recommended for use was *lā adrī* “I do not know.” Aristotle was described as saying that he was so fond of using it that he used it also in cases where he possessed the required knowledge.<sup>217</sup> No educational device is omitted to hallow its constant employment.<sup>218</sup> A somewhat

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Dāwūd at-Tāʾī, as quoted by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Iqtidāʾ*, 179.

<sup>215v</sup> Cf. al-Bayhaqī, *Tatimmat Ṣiwān al-ḥikmah*, ed. M. Shafīʿ, 121 (Lahore 1935).

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Rosenthal, *Technique and Approach*, 63a, n. 4; also, Ḥunayn, *Nawādir al-falāsifah*, in Ms. Munich ar. 651, fol. 14b; al-Mubashshir, 200. Al-Bayhaqī, *Taʾrīkh-i-Bayhaq*, 143 (Teheran 1317), quotes the Prophet as saying that the use of *lā adrī* is one-third of knowledge. The Prophet also told the author in a dream that he who says, ‘I do not know,’ when this is so, is the most learned of men. Cf. also al-Mubashshir, 303.

The remark that “asking questions is one half of knowledge” is accepted among the sayings of Luqmān in Ḥunayn, *Nawādir*, fol. 130a; al-Mubashshir, 273. Cf. above, pp. 255 and 269.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. Ibn Hindū, 77 f., and, anonymously, al-Mubashshir, 334.

<sup>218</sup> Among the authorities pressed into service as endorsers of *lā adrī*, we find, for instance, ‘Alī (cf. al-Yazīdī, *Amālī*, 141 [Hyderabad 1948]), ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar (cf. above, p. 263), and Abū Ḥanīfah, who comments on “*lā adrī* is one half of knowledge” (cf. *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, XIII, 404). A number of ancient Muslims, among them the Prophet himself and, prominently, Ibn ‘Umar, are invoked for establishing the right attitude toward admitting lack of knowledge in Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ*, II, 49–55; for part

less explicit admission of doubt and ignorance is the use of the phrase *Allāh a'lam* "God knows better (best)." The *ḥadīth* commands: "It constitutes part of knowledge to say, if one has no knowledge, *Allāh a'lam*."<sup>219</sup> It is unusual to find someone deprecate the use of these words. 'Umar is depicted as having done so. He expressed anger at people who in discussing a passage of the Qur'ān made use of them, when in his opinion, they should have said either "we know" or "we don't know."<sup>220</sup> The use of *Allāh a'lam* might have been appropriate in the case of ordinary people and ordinary subjects, but scholarship and the importance of the subject matter made an unequivocal statement preferable in this case.

The unwillingness to admit one's ignorance and the perpetual scholarly exhortation to overcome this harmful attitude were, of course, not exclusively Islamic. The closest predecessor to Muslim civilization, the Syriac Church, knew about it, and the great Aphrem stated the case in these words: "But this which I have mentioned is found in the case of great sages, namely, that one confesses, 'I do not know.' For this is their great knowledge that if they do not know a thing, they confess that they do not know it."<sup>221</sup> In Islam where knowledge acquired tremendous significance for an individual's social standing, the temptation to claim knowledge where there was none was a great danger for the entire fabric of society. It was constantly warned against in the educational literature and in the reflections of scholars about the alleged or real decay of their specialties. In its most succinct form, this warning finds its endlessly repeated expression in the numerous variations on the theme of the use of *lā adrī*.

Philosophy in the name of Plato and Aristotle popularized the notion of the general insufficiency of human knowledge. It impressed itself deeply upon Muslim consciousness, as indicated by

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of its material, this rather exhaustive treatment of the subject refers to 'Abdallāh b. Wahb and his *Kitāb al-Majālis*. It is clear that the basic canon of all these traditions was move or less fixed by the early eighth century. (Ibn Wahb 'an Mālik is cited for the subject already in the *History* of Abū Zur'ah ad-Dimashqī, Ms. Fatih 4210, fol. 63b.)

<sup>219</sup> Cf. Abū Khaythamah, no. 49 ('Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd), also, no. 67; *Concordance*, IV, 317b38 f., 320b39 f., 337b49 ff.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. I. Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung*, 73 (Leiden 1920, reprint 1952). The reference is to aṭ-Tabarī, *Tafsīr*, III, 47, *ad* Qur'ān 2: 266/268.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. C. W. Mitchell, *S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations*, text, II, 6, trans., p. III (London-Oxford 1921).



the many passages in literature where it is referred to in one or both of the two basic forms: "The only aspect of the excellence of knowledge I possess is my knowledge that I do not know,"<sup>222</sup> and: "Were my saying, 'I do not know,' not a confirmation<sup>223</sup> of the fact that I do know, I would say that I do not know." In Greek tradition, we find the idea basically reduced to the following three sayings, all of which have their prototype, it would seem, in a passage of Plato's *Apology* 21D: "Heraclitus, the physicist, said that as a youth (already) he had become the wisest man of all, because he knew that he knew nothing";<sup>224</sup> "Democritus said, 'I only know that I do not know'";<sup>225</sup> and "Socrates believed that he knew nothing except that very fact, while all the others did not even know this much."<sup>226</sup> The Arabic tradition represents a conflation of all of them. The Democritean version appears in Arabic also in the form of the sage's attribution of his great knowledge to "my recognition (*ma'rifah*) that my knowledge is small."<sup>227</sup> A rather close rendition of the Socratic version, but with some fancy trimmings, comes to us from Ibn Hindû: "Socrates said: I often used to dream that I was the most learned of my contemporaries. I could not find myself deserving of this description except by

<sup>222</sup> In addition to Plato, this saying is also ascribed to Hippocrates (in another passage of al-Mubashshir, 50), when it is not anonymous as, for instance, in Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyûn*, II, 126; al-Mâwardî, *Adab*, 44; ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahânî, *Muhâḍarât*, I, 23. Al-Mubashshir, 177, quotes the Platonic saying that Plato knew only that he did not know, during his entire stay in this world, cf. Rosenthal, *Technique and Approach*, 63a, n. 3.

<sup>223</sup> The only noticeable variation in the wording of this saying occurs in connection with this particular word. It is *tathbīt<sup>am</sup>* in a version going under the name of Plato, cf. al-Mubashshir, 167, and *al-Mukhtâr min kalâm al-ḥukamâ' al-arba'ah*, in Ms. Aya Sofya 2460, fol. 33a–b. A minor variant, or rather, a mistake, is *tathabbūt<sup>am</sup>* in Ḥunayn, *Nawâdir*, fol. 56b. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyûn*, II, 126, has *sabab<sup>am</sup>*, which must be corrected to *tathbīt<sup>am</sup>*. However, in the case of the saying's attribution to Socrates, the word used is *ikhbâr<sup>am</sup>*, cf. al-Mubashshir, 125; Ibn Abî Uṣaybi'ah, *Uyûn al-anbâ'*, ed. A. Müller, I, 49 (Cairo and Königsberg 1882–84). Where the saying is connected with Archigenes, *dalîl<sup>am</sup>* is used (cf. al-Mubashshir, 302; Rosenthal, *Fortleben*, 179, no. 50). Thus, all three versions occur in al-Mubashshir in different places. It would seem a plausible assumption that they represent three different translations of the same saying as attributed to different authorities.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, no. 310; Antonius Melissa, 959 f.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, no. 264.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. Antonius Melissa, 959 f. The first part only in Diogenes Laertius, II, 32.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, 297, see Rosenthal, *Fortleben*, 173, no. 5.



virtue of the fact that I often say, 'I do not know,' in reply to matters I am asked about." Ibn Hindû adds another version: "It was revealed to me that I was the most learned of men. I was surprised, because I was aware that I did not deserve this description, but revelation never lies. Thus, I deserve this description, because I know that I do not know, whereas other people do not know and do not know that they do not know."<sup>228</sup> Ibn Hindû goes on quoting an Arabic verse to the effect that "the poor fellow does not know that he does not know." The verse rather castigates "compound ignorance" and does not aim at praising the philosopher's despair of achieving true knowledge. This is also the case in the verse cited by Usâmah b. Munqidh:

You are ignorant, and you do not know that you are ignorant.  
I wish I could see to it that you know that you do not know.

Ibn Munqidh, however, also mentions a versification of the Socratic saying:

Is it not remarkable that I am a man  
Mighty in disputation, subtle in the choice of words,  
Who dies with his soul possessing as its only knowledge  
The knowledge that he has no knowledge?<sup>229</sup>

It is understandable that this great Greek idea re-occurs in a passage allegedly of Persian origin that says that "it is part of knowledge to know that you do not know."<sup>230</sup> On the other hand, it would have been most inappropriate to put this remark into the mouth of the Prophet, and this seems not to have been done. In fact, some resistance to its implications appears to have been current. It is missing in a good many *adab* works where it might be expected to have made its appearance. The reason for disregarding it could have been the triteness that must have accrued to it over the years, as well as the fact that it was so closely allied to Hellenism. However, an aversion to the moderate skepticism implied in it is more likely to have made it objectionable to many Muslims. Mere chance, or stylistic considerations, may likewise not have been the reason why the second half of the Mu'tazilah saying cited at the outset of the present book was omitted by some of the authors who reported it in later centuries.<sup>231</sup> While the diffi-

<sup>228</sup> Cf. Ibn Hindû, 86.

<sup>229</sup> Cf. Usâmah b. Munqidh, *al-Badî'*, 84 (Cairo 1380/1960).

<sup>230</sup> Cf. Miskawayh, *Jâwîdân Khiradh*, 74.

<sup>231</sup> Cf. above, p. V.

culty of knowledge and the need for constant and full devotion to it were accepted facts, any doubts that knowledge might not yield itself even to the most ardent and intense pursuit were better suppressed. In a society which had come to accept the supremacy of the concept of knowledge, it was, perhaps, possible to harbor some misgivings as to the possibility of the realization in practice of full and certain knowledge, but many were naturally reluctant to admit the possession of such misgivings either to themselves or to others.

### *Personal Failings of Scholars*

The educational literature never ceases repeating that scholars should be modest and humble. Haughtiness and conceit were generally considered the primordial danger and curse of scholarship. Iblīs, while he was still answering to the name of ‘Azâzīl and was not yet the devil, was the strongest among the angels in independent judgment and possessed the greatest amount of knowledge. This was what made him haughty.<sup>232</sup> The angels in a body claimed to be, if not better than the newly created Adam, then at least more knowledgeable than he, because they had existed before him. While they were thus admiring their own knowledge, they suffered a grim setback. It was Adam who was taught by God all the names. Thus, he came into the possession of a knowledge vastly greater than theirs.<sup>233</sup> Again, knowledge proved a temptation, this time for the new human race. Cain killed Abel, because he was envious of the knowledge that Adam had specifically entrusted to him. Therefore, Adam later on entrusted the book containing his last will and testament—and with it, apparently, the sum and substance of his vast knowledge—to Seth and ordered him to keep it concealed from Cain and his progeny.<sup>234</sup> And so it went through all of history. The Qârûn (Korah) of the Qur’ân became overbearing because of his knowledge (Qur’ân 28:78/78). His behavior was all the more sinful and destructive, because he claimed to possess a kind of real knowledge which, in fact, he did not possess. When Jesus was hailed with the words, “Blessed be the womb that bore you,” he retorted, “Blessed be the one whom God taught His Book and

<sup>232</sup> Cf. at-Ṭabarī, *Annales*, I, 83.

<sup>233</sup> Cf. at-Ṭabarī, *Annales*, I, 99 f.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. at-Ṭabarī, *Annales*, I, 159 f.

who did not be(come) a tyrant.”<sup>235</sup> There is the famous tradition of the Prophet in which he censures those who seek knowledge in order to be able to contend and vie with scholars. It was extended to include, among scholarly failings, an attitude of hostility toward stupid people and the desire to draw attention to oneself.<sup>236</sup> The tradition was part of the campaign directed against the tendency of scholars to “study for this world” which was blamed constantly. In adh-Dhahabî’s list of major sins, it was ranked as one, between hypocrisy and deceit.<sup>237</sup> Knowledge should be studied for its own sake, but, alas, it seems there never was a period when this precept was widely practiced.

I have seen the people of our time  
 Seek knowledge not for the sake of knowledge,  
 But for vying with their colleagues  
 And for being equipped for tyrannizing and wronging others.<sup>238</sup>

Studying for the world deprives scholars of their heavenly reward in the other world. In a more secular vein, it robs knowledge of its sweetness and splendor.<sup>239</sup> In adh-Dhahabî’s list of major sins, it is combined with the equally grave sin of “concealing knowledge” which means the death of the social usefulness of knowledge. While knowledge must not be imparted to those who do not deserve it or are not capable of understanding it, it must also not be withheld from the deserving<sup>240</sup> by some so-called scholar for selfish reasons, in order to promote his own standing in the world. The transmission and spread of knowledge bring it to fruition. Besides, it is also pointed out frequently that the communication

<sup>235</sup> Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Bahjah*, I, 438. The quotation is from Luke 11:27 f. Jesus’ reply there is, “. . . who hear the word of God and keep (it).” This, of course, is rather different from the Arabic text, which may have added some echo of Psalms 1:1. The use of *gibbôr* in Psalms 112:2 should be noted, but contrary to the *jabbâr* of the Arabic text, it is a positive term there.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. above, p. 172, n. 2.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. adh-Dhahabî, *Kitâb al-Kabâ’ir*, 140–43 (Cairo 1385/1965).

<sup>238</sup> Cf. az-Zamakhsharî, *Rabî’*, in Ms. Yale L-5, fol. 184b; Ibn al-Jawzî, *Manâqib al-Imâm Ahmad b. Hanbal*, 148; al-Ibshîhî, *Mustatraf*, I, 24. Az-Zamakhsharî mentions as the poet Bashîr b. ‘Abd-al-Rahmân b. Ka’b b. Mâlik al-Anṣârî, cf. *Aghânî*, XV, 27. M. Shafî, *Analytical Indices to the Kitâb al-ʿId al-Farîd*, I, 204 (Calcutta 1935), lists him under Bishr. Instead of “tyrannizing” (*al-ghashm*), which appears to be the best reading, Ibn al-Jawzî has something like “winning disputes” (*al-khaṣm*), and al-Ibshîhî has “cheating” (*al-ghashsh*).

<sup>239</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, 323, who speaks of knowledge and wisdom.

<sup>240</sup> On this topic, cf., for instance, Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi’*, I, 110 f.

of knowledge to others results in an increase of knowledge. "The charity tax (*ḡakâh*) to be levied on knowledge is teaching those who have not enough knowledge... Such a tax is even more necessary in the case of knowledge, as knowledge is increased by spending. Knowledge, it has been said, is like hair. Whenever some hair is shaved off, it grows back more strongly. If it is not shaved off, it retains its fixed size to which it grows back when it is clipped. Left alone, it does not go beyond it."<sup>241</sup>

Failures of this sort and faulty character traits make up the "evil scholar" (*ʿâlim as-sûʿ*). We hear much about the harm he causes to himself and, above all, to society. His harmfulness was stressed by the representatives of secular learning, too, but, basically, the figure of the evil scholar was one inspired by religion. Shades of the New Testament are unmistakable in the preference shown for statements ascribed to Jesus concerning evil scholars.<sup>242</sup> Scholars were expected to have the proper qualities as established in the generally accepted canon of ethics. Apparently in this sense, ʿAbdallâh b. al-Mubâarak claimed that there was greater need among men of religion for a little *adab* than for much knowledge.<sup>243</sup>

The learned also have to observe society's rules concerning morality. The "wicked scholar" (*al-ʿâlim al-fâsiq*) was the frequent target of concerned educators. He is the worst of men, according to a remark ascribed to Jesus.<sup>244</sup> Wâṣil b. ʿAṭâ, however, also warned against men who were pious but at the same time stupid. Together with wicked scholars, they belonged to the most harmful type of human beings. In the case of wicked scholars, knowledge suffered harm, because their knowledge was sure to be rejected on account of their wickedness. In the case of those who were pious and stupid, the harm was done through the spread of ignorance, since their piety was sure to make people accept their ignorance. Moderation in both directions was, according to Wâṣil, what promised the best hope for future salvation.<sup>245</sup> Here, as so often, the thrust is against piety and in favor of knowledge. However, *fisq* "wickedness," that is, moral misbehavior in the widest sense, was considered a

<sup>241</sup> Cf. Ibn Butlân, *Daʿwat al-aṭibbâʿ*, 20 (n.p., n.y.).

<sup>242</sup> Cf., for instance, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Iqṭidâʿ*, 195 f.

<sup>243</sup> Cf. above, p. 174, and Usâmah b. Munqidh, *Lubâb al-âdab*, 231 (Cairo 1354/1935). Cf. also above, p. 293.

<sup>244</sup> Cf. *Kitâb as-Saʿâdah*, 149.

<sup>245</sup> Cf. at-Tawḥīdī, *Baṣāʾir*, I, 299; also, al-Ghazzâlī, *Iḥyâʾ*, I, 52, trans. Faris, 153.

peculiar failing of scholars. A pious man could not be “wicked,” if he was to be deserving of being called pious in the first place. The socially unacceptable actions of a scholar nullify his usefulness for society.<sup>246</sup>

Constantly repeated warnings of this sort indicate clearly that the conditions warned against were thought to be quite prevalent, and probably were. The emphatic condemnations of “studying for this world” suffice by themselves to show that many scholars did just that. They also seem to clash strangely with the strongly held and frequently enounced thesis that knowledge brings worldly material success. As usual, a verse tells the whole story:

The search for knowledge (‘ulûm) means much humiliation.  
The neglect of it means grievous affliction.  
Thus, bear with the search for knowledge, for  
After humiliation, it means high rank and position.<sup>247</sup>

The optimistic note was triumphantly sounded by *ḥadīth* scholars who already in the ninth century were confident of ultimately taking over political power, as did, in fact, happen, and they ascribed the defeatist negativism to their Mu‘tazilah adversaries. This situation was graphically illustrated by Ṣāliḥ Jazarah (d. 293/906, or 294) by means of an exchange of verses between a Mu‘tazilah who said:

Reading, writing, jurisprudence, and all scholarly occupation  
Are the origin of discomfort, poverty, worries, humiliation,

and a *ḥadīth* scholar who responded:

Writing, study, the occupation with the notebooks of tradition  
Are the origin of great piety and political ambition.<sup>248</sup>

The seeming contradiction can be easily resolved. The worldly success accompanying knowledge is a natural consequence, something that is inherent in the nature of knowledge as an intellectual

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<sup>246</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, 168, in the name of Plato: “The most unfortunate of scholars is the one whose teachings are invalidated when disapproved (traits) of his become obvious.”

<sup>247</sup> Cf. al-Bayhaqī, *Ta’rīkh-i-Bayhaq*, 104. Another poetic recital of the almost automatic rewards of strenuous study and a good education may, for instance, be found in Nizāmī’s *Heft Peiker*, ed. H. Ritter and J. Rypka, 38 (Prague 1934), trans. C. E. Wilson, 35 (London 1924).

<sup>248</sup> That is, the attainment of political power and leadership. Cf. *Ta’rīkh Baghdad*, IX, 323 f.; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rīkh Dimashq*, VI, 381 f. (Damascus 1329–51).

and spiritual force dominating society, which is bound to triumph over material things. It can do this by either disregarding material things or by pressing them into its service. But in order to harness this force, a person must rise above material considerations and show contempt for the ordinary goods and pleasures of this world. Naturally enough, the incidental result was often taken to be the intended goal, and the material rewards going with knowledge were misunderstood as its true and desirable consequences. As such a misunderstanding of the true nature of knowledge was harmful to knowledge as the stuff that keeps society going, it required clarification. This is why personal failings of scholars were the constant concern not only of professional educators in Islam but also of every thoughtful Muslim. And this is why it was necessary and unavoidable to have those interminable complaints that scholars of a given time no longer followed the straight and narrow path of an unselfish devotion to scholarship.

*Knowledge as Life and as Food for the Soul*

Attention was paid to the blemishes that might affect knowledge and scholars. Much more, however, was said in favor of a positive evaluation of knowledge as a force in society. Knowledge is useful. At least, all acceptable knowledge ought to be useful. Much depends on the way in which "usefulness" is conceived.<sup>249</sup> Often, as we have seen, the label of usefulness was reserved exclusively for the metaphysical benefits which only certain types of religious knowledge and religious activity could guarantee. In contrast, there was the frequent observation that all knowledge was useful and should be cultivated. A certain bias against theoretical knowledge of no immediate practical usefulness was kept alive. Socrates "was asked why seawater had become salty. He replied: If you can indicate to me the use that will come to you from knowing the answer to this question, I shall give you the reason."<sup>250</sup> And Diogenes, "seeing a youth with a lamp, said to him: Do you know where this fire comes from? The youth replied: If you can tell me where it goes to, I shall tell you where it comes from, thus effectively silencing Diogenes, something nobody else had been able to do."<sup>251</sup> These

<sup>249</sup> Cf. Ibn Sînâ's definition of usefulness as the true good, in Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 61.

<sup>250</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, 113.

<sup>251</sup> Cf. ash-Shahrastânî, 333, trans. Haarbrücker, II, 192.

anecdotes undoubtedly of Greek origin were meant to be sophisticated witticisms, rather than constitute a considered judgment on the nature of useful knowledge. But they illustrate a common human reluctance to accept the greatness of knowledge in its full dimension. This attitude continued in Islam and did its share of harm. However, on the whole, it was counteracted by the firm conviction that it was known what the usefulness of knowledge really was.

The all-sustaining power of knowledge is captured in the simile of knowledge being food for the soul. Various versions of it are met with in the Graeco-Arabic tradition, "Like as the body grows through food and becomes firm through exercise, thus the soul grows through studying and becomes strong through patiently enduring (the hardships of) studying."<sup>252</sup> Diogenes, it seems, was supposed to have made this statement. Someone else, apparently Theognis, is said to have already played a variation on the theme: "Knowledge is not on the level of food which suffices to feed two or three but cannot feed many persons. Rather, it is like light which enables many eyes to see all at the same time."<sup>253</sup> Diogenes, or, according to another version, the Church Father, Basilus, admonishes us to take the appropriate measures against harmful knowledge in the same way in which we are used to protect ourselves against harmful foods, because knowledge is the food of the soul.<sup>254</sup> According to Plato, the pleasure which the soul shares with the body is that of food and drink, whereas its incorporeal pleasure is that of knowledge and wisdom.<sup>255</sup> For Pseudo-Apollonius of Tyana (Balînûs), proof of the incorporeality of the soul lies in the fact that it does not partake of material nourishment. "According to the Stoics," he reports, "Socrates said that the soul eats; however, its food is something that is not corporeal, since the food of the soul is knowledge."<sup>256</sup> Knowledge is also described by Ibn Buṭlân as the thing that nourishes the intellect. It is for the intellect

<sup>252</sup> Cf. *Kitâb as-Sa'âdah*, 170. At its first occurrence, "studying" should, perhaps, be corrected to "knowledge".

<sup>253</sup> Cf. Abû Sulaymân al-Manṭiqî as-Sijistânî, *Šiwân*, in Ms. Murad Molla 1408, fol. 44b; Themistius, *Peri phylas*, in the Syriac translation edited by E. Sachau, *Inedita Syriaca*, 49 (Halle 1870, reprint Hildesheim 1968).

<sup>254</sup> Cf. at-Tawḥîdî, *Imtâ'*, II, 34; al-Mubashshir, 283.

<sup>255</sup> Cf. at-Tawḥîdî, *Imtâ'*, II, 36.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. Balînûs, *Sirr al-khalîqah*, fol. 172a. It is a bit strange to find the Stoics mentioned in connection with incorporeality of the soul.

what food is for the body,<sup>257</sup> since the two supplement each other and must exist together in human beings. Ibn Taymiyah states that “the arrival of knowledge in the heart is like the arrival of food in the body. The body is aware of food and drink. In the same manner, the hearts are aware of the sciences (*‘ulūm*) that establish themselves in them and which are their food and drink.”<sup>258</sup> In the popular conception, knowledge and books have always been identified as spiritual food, down to the present day.

An even higher estimate of the value of knowledge is implied in the equation of knowledge with life itself. Theology had its own reasons for speculating on the relationship of life and knowledge.<sup>259</sup> In popular lore, it was an idea often expressed. Long before Islam, ancient Oriental thinkers had conceived the idea of wisdom that gives life, and the Greeks spoke of those lacking education as the waking dead.<sup>260</sup> The ancient tradition remained alive in Islam. Aristotle is credited with the saying that “knowledge is life, and ignorance is death.”<sup>261</sup> In Islamic terms, the life-negating character of ignorance is depicted in verses such as these:

In ignorance there is death for the ignorant, before they die.  
Their bodies are tombs, before they are buried.

A man who is not given life by knowledge is dead.  
He enjoys no resurrection till the Resurrection.<sup>262</sup>

Knowledge, according to the poet, restores people and quenches their thirst, like as rain falling upon wood gives it new life.<sup>263</sup> Among

<sup>257</sup> Cf. Ibn Baṭlān, *Da‘wat al-aṭibbā’*, 7. The same applies to *adab*, according to Miskawayh, *Jāwīdhān Khiradh*, 268: “When the intellect matures, *adab* coalesces with it, like as food coalesces with a healthy body.” Aṭ-Turtūshī, *Sirāj*, 201, speaks of the *‘aql* as being more in need of wisdom and *adab* than is the body of food and drink. For Aristotle calling “wisdom and knowledge the food of the intellect,” cf. az-Zamakhsharī, *Rabī‘*, in Ms. Yale L-5, fol. 185b.

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Ibn Taymiyah, *Naqḍ al-manṭiq*, 36. “Knowledge is for the heart like water for plants and like food for the body,” according to al-Bayābānākī (d. 736/1336), cf. Ms. Veliuddin 1795, fol. 53b.

<sup>259</sup> Cf. above, p. 126.

<sup>260</sup> Cf. *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, no. 55, in the name of Aristotle. “Those who do not understand something wise are not alive,” runs a verse by Chairemon, cf. Stobaeus, III, 222. Cf. also above, p. 287.

<sup>261</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, 216, and the *Liber de pomo*, see J. Kraemer, in *Studi Orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida*, I, 502, n. 6 (Rome 1956).

<sup>262</sup> Cf. al-Māwardī, *Adab*, 17, citing the verses as those of a contemporary. As-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt ash-Shāfi‘īyah*, IV, 27, says that their author was a man from al-Baṣrah and that al-Māwardī recited them to Mahdī b. ‘Alī al-Isfarā‘īnī. See also al-‘Almawī, *Mu‘īd*, 9.

<sup>263</sup> As quoted by at-Tawhīdī, *Imtā‘*, III, 175.



the many predicates that are showered upon knowledge, we also find “the life of the dead, the ornament of the living, the perfection of man.”<sup>264</sup> For az-Zamakhsharî, knowledge is the life of the heart after ignorance, as well as the light of the eyes.<sup>265</sup> Correspondingly, Usâmah b. Munqidh cites an unnamed philosopher who called *adab* rather than knowledge “the life of the hearts.”<sup>266</sup> The Jewish mystic, Baḥyâ b. Pâqûdâ, speaks of the “knowledge which is the life of their hearts.”<sup>267</sup> Wisdom and knowledge are truly the food of the heart which through them maintains its life, and if they are kept away from it for three days, it dies.<sup>268</sup> However, from a more technical, philosophical point of view, Ibn Ḥazm argues against the idea, expressed, he says, by “the representatives of religious scholarship (*ahl ash-sharī‘ah*), that knowledge is the opposite of death. This is wrong, for the soul, after leaving the body, is more firmly grounded in knowledge than ever before, while the compound body does not know anything.”<sup>269</sup>

More peculiar is the remark ascribed to the sages that “a man’s knowledge is his everlasting child.”<sup>270</sup> Eternal duration was more commonly associated with books, which were also equated with physical progeny. The thought that knowledge assured eternal life was indicated also in other sayings such as, for instance: “He who gives life to some kind of knowledge never dies,” and, “the guardians of wealth are dead, while they are alive. The guardians of knowledge live, while they are dead.”<sup>271</sup> This last saying appears in a version ascribed to ‘Alī as: “The guardians of wealth are dead, while they are alive. Scholars last as long as time (*dahr*).”<sup>272</sup> A varia-

<sup>264</sup> Cf. at-Tawḥīdī, *Maṭālib al-waṣṭayn*, ed. I. al-Kaylânī, 21 (Damascus 1961) = *Akhlâq al-waṣṭayn*, ed. M. b. Tâwīt at-Ṭanjī, 28 (Damascus 1385/1965).

<sup>265</sup> Cf. az-Zamakhsharî, *Rabī‘*, in Ms. Yale L-5, fol. 182b.

<sup>266</sup> Cf. Usâmah b. Munqidh, *Lubâb*, 234.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. Baḥyâ, *Hidāyah*, 4.

<sup>268</sup> Cf. Muḥammad b. Ibrâhīm b. Aḥmad al-Bustī, *ar-Ri‘āyah bi-waṣṣiyat al-murīdīn fī makârim al-akhlâq*, in Ms. Bursa, Haraççi 765, fol. 4a. The manuscript is dated in 587/1191, and the author is unlikely to have lived before the twelfth century. However, I have been unsuccessful in my attempts to identify him. The work begins with a chapter on knowledge, which contains some of the common sayings on the subject cited here, and continues with chapters on *islâm*, faith, repentance, and so on.

<sup>269</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Taqrīb*, 72.

<sup>270</sup> Cf. ibn al-Mu‘tazz, *Ādâb*, ed. Krachkovsky, VI, 65; Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi‘*, I, 16.

<sup>271</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, *Ādâb*, ed. Krachkovsky, VI, 87.

<sup>272</sup> Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, II, 212.

tion on the theme that fathers give physical life, to their children, while teachers give their students the good life, speaks of “everlasting life.”<sup>273</sup> Knowledge was indeed conceived as everlasting in Islam but this referred to the religious insights which were not a human creation. According to the Prophetical tradition, the only hazard to eternal life knowledge must overcome is the mortality of scholars; their disappearance is believed to foreshadow the Last Day and the end of the Muslim community. However this may be, knowledge as “food” or as “life” was considered a fundamental condition for the continued existence of the individual as well as society.

*Knowledge in its Relation to Money and Power*

Reflections on the material rewards of successful efforts to acquire knowledge and to achieve the rank and status of a scholar generally made these points: 1. The efforts are difficult and involve many hardships, humiliations, and deprivations. 2. They must be made regardless of any hope for material rewards. 3. They lead, however, to material rewards in the form of prestige which brings with it a position of high regard in society and a certain measure of affluence. But 4. knowledge by itself is a much more valuable possession than any material gain that may come to the scholar.

Nobility of birth was held in the lowest esteem of all the material advantages. It was certainly deemed by far less valuable than intellectual merit as proved by the possession of knowledge:

The learned, intelligent person who is his own man  
Has no need of (noble) family origins by virtue of the quality of his  
knowledge.

Be whose son you want to be, and be perfect!  
The outstanding keenness of his mind makes a man, nothing else.

How great is the difference between a man honored for his origin  
And a man honored for his own sake!<sup>274</sup>

The verses echo the famous remark of ‘Alî that “a man’s value

<sup>273</sup> Cf. al-‘Almawî, *Mu‘id*, 7; F. Rosenthal, in *Orientalia*, N.S., XXVII (1958), 42.

<sup>274</sup> Cf. the Houtsma fragment of the *Fihrist*, in the name of Judge Abû Muḥammad ‘Abdallâh b. Aḥmad b. Zabīr, cf. the Persian translation of the *Fihrist*, 320. For Ibn Zabīr, see Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 512, n. 2.

consists in what he knows or does well."<sup>275</sup> Ignorance, on the other hand, lowers the prestige an individual may possess and annuls the advantages of noble birth:

Knowledge lifts the lowly person to the heights.  
Ignorance keeps the youth of noble birth immobile.<sup>276</sup>

Rarely was there a point of view on which all the spokesmen of Muslim society agreed so unanimously and which they expressed so persistently. It would not do to suggest that there was a large residue of admiration for noble birth in Muslim society, once it had moved out of the Arabian peninsula, and that the intellectuals constantly and strenuously raised their voice against it, merely in order to combat a tendency dangerous in their eyes and detrimental to their particular interests. Noble birth had its advantages, but it could not compete with money, and certainly not with knowledge. The Muslims themselves were able to contrast the Muslim attitude toward social stratification determined by birth with what they believed had been the dominant characteristic of the Persian civilization preceding Islam, namely, its insistence upon social immobility as the prerequisite for a well-ordered society and upon birth as the decisive factor for the individual's position in and value to society.<sup>277</sup> On our part, we may point out that in

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<sup>275</sup> Cf. above, pp. 256 and 281. There are innumerable references, cf., for instance, ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahânî, *Muḥâḍarât*, I, 17, or Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi'*, I, 99. A versification of 'Alî's statement, allegedly by al-Khalîl, is often cited:

A high person is not like a low person.  
No! Nor is the sharp-witted person like the dull-witted person.  
.....  
A man's value is the extent of what he knows and does well.  
As was decided by the imâm 'Alî.

<sup>276</sup> Cf. ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahânî, *Muḥâḍarât*, I, 17; Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi'*, I, 18. Strangely enough, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ Majma' al-âdâb*, ed. Muṣṭafa Jawâd, IV, 1, 467 (Damascus 1962), ascribes the verse to a certain 'Afīf-ad-dīn Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Iṣfahânî, unless his authorship was meant to refer to the two following verses.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. al-Āmirî, *Ilâm*, 160, trans. F. Rosenthal, in *The Islamic Quarterly*, III (1956), 52. (Contrast, however, above, p. 281, for the need for intellectual achievement, in order to be able to overcome restraints imposed by the stratification of society.) It is interesting to see that in Miskawayh, *Jawā'idhân Khiradh*, 42, the knightly virtue of bravery is compared to knowledge and found wanting. This is said to go back to the Sassanian ruler Qubâdh (Kavadh). The problem of the relative merit of bravery and scholarship might, in fact, have been discussed in pre-Islamic Iran, but its solution in

Christian Europe, the shift from the belief in the superiority of noble birth to the stress on personal merit was a slow development indeed. It began gathering strength only in the fifteenth century,<sup>278</sup> inaugurating the “modern” era with its unprecedented flowering of human achievement.

A much larger remnant of doubt and vacillation affected the Muslim attitude toward money and property. Next to knowledge, commerce was the mainspring of the mobility of Muslim society. The power of money was fully understood by scholars. Their own relative poverty as contrasted to the wealth of the commercial and landholding segments of society remained for them an article of faith firmly to be believed in and constantly to be proclaimed.<sup>279</sup> Not very many among them might have shown appreciation for the sentiment that the principal merit of knowledge was to help a poor man to be satisfied with his lot.<sup>280</sup> As so many other vital concerns, the bitterness of the poorly rewarded intellectual was most vividly put into words by Abû Ḥayyân at-Tawḥîdî in the tenth century.<sup>281</sup> From later times, we can document what no doubt had always been the actual situation, namely, that a certain middle-class prosperity based on commercial activity was the background from which scholars most commonly came (unless, perhaps, they happened to be born into a scholarly family of established standing, but even these usually possessed commercial connections).<sup>282</sup> Those who overcame grinding poverty to become prominent in scholarship were but a small minority, albeit a remarkable one. It would be difficult to venture any kind of general

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favor of knowledge and scholarship again casts doubt upon the Persian attribution (cf. above, p. 284, n. 3).

The Greek attitude toward nobility of birth (*eugeneia*) was rather ambivalent. Coming from good stock was considered important and even indispensable for virtue, but the possession of virtue was the decisive factor.

<sup>278</sup> Cf. C. C. Williard, in *Studies in the Renaissance*, XIV (1967), 33–48.

<sup>279</sup> Cf., for instance, the verse by Abû l-Ḥasan ‘Alî b. Muḥammad al-Badihi, cited in ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahânî, *Muḥâḍarât*, I, 17: “Most followers of knowledge and education are humble and destitute,” or the verse on the scholar’s inkwell being the hideout of poverty, cited in Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 57.

<sup>280</sup> Cf. ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahânî, *Muḥâḍarât*, I, 17, in the name of the caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd-al-‘Azîz.

<sup>281</sup> Cf., for instance, the quotations from at-Tawḥîdî’s works assembled in the biography of at-Tawḥîdî in Yâqût, *Irshâd*.

<sup>282</sup> Cf., for instance, the article “Ibn Ḥadjar,” in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Cf. also above, p. 296.

statement on the social background of Muslim mystics. Whatever it was, they quite naturally rejected wealth in favor of spiritual values, at least in theory.

A certain respect for wealth was not considered incompatible with learning. Certain sayings expressing this view remained popular. "Why do wisdom and wealth not go together?, Plato was asked, and he replied: Because perfection is rare."<sup>283</sup> Meant primarily to extol wisdom, the saying takes note of the fact that wealth, too, is an indispensable part of human perfection. An anecdote based on Plato's remark about "the wise going to the doors of the rich" (*Republic* 489B) is cited frequently: "Diogenes was asked why the rich did not go to the doors of the learned, whereas the learned went to the doors of the rich. He replied: Because the learned know the value of money, while the rich do not know the excellence of knowledge."<sup>284</sup> The Persian sage, Buzurjmīhr, was also credited with this saying, and it was expressly stated that it provided decisive proof for the superiority of knowledge over wealth.<sup>285</sup> Its prototype is well known from Greek works. It does not appear there in precisely the same form as in Arabic, and it is not uninformative to compare the differences. In one of the Greek versions, the reply Aristippus is said to have given to Dionysius reads: "Because the wise know what they need, while the rich do not."<sup>286</sup> In another version, Eubulus tells Socrates that the fact that the wise sit or even sleep at the doors of the rich clearly proves the superiority of wealth over wisdom. Greek tradition in a way rejected this probably more original form of the witticism. In Muslim tradition, finally, it was completely superseded by the moralizing conclusion in favor of knowledge. Still, the anecdote retained some of its old flavor and suggested a

<sup>283</sup> Cf. at-Tawhīdī, *Baṣā'ir*, in Ms. phot. Cairo adab 9104 (= Fatih 3695), IV, 116; al-Māwardī, *Adab*, 17 (anonymous); al-Mubashshir, 132; *al-Bustān*, in Ms. Paris ar. 4811, fol. 6a; Ikhtiyār-ad-dīn al-Ḥusaynī, *Asās al-iqtibās*, 48 (Constantinople 1298).

<sup>284</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, 80, also, 19 (Hermes): Ibn Hindū, 102 (*Dyqemys*). In Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 213 f., the story is attributed to al-Khalīl, and "the rich" are replaced by "kings."

<sup>285</sup> Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn*, II, 122 (above, p. 258); al-Māwardī, *Adab*, 17; Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd, V, 361.

<sup>286</sup> Cf. Diogenes Laertius, II, 69; *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, no. 6. The editor of the *Gnomologium Vaticanum* gives many other references and quotes the text of the other version. For the latter, cf. Schenkl, *Florilegium Ariston*, in *Wiener Studien*, XI (1889), 19; Stobaeus, V, 744.

certain appreciation of material prosperity as a human good to be appreciated even by scholars.

There was certainly no lack of embittered or cynical individuals who saw wealth as the only worthy object of human endeavors and who even went so far as to claim that all scholarly works were written only as a subterfuge for obtaining wealth, as stated in a verse by 'Uthmân b. Khumârtâsh (d. 619/1222).<sup>287</sup> However, it was clear to the majority and impressed upon them by the books they were reading and the intellectual climate surrounding them that "wealth disappears, whereas knowledge remains."<sup>288</sup> Your knowledge cannot be taken away from you, but your wealth can, and often is.<sup>289</sup> Knowledge is an inexhaustible treasure,<sup>290</sup> while all other treasures are not inexhaustible. It is a possession which can be spent without thereby suffering any diminution. On the contrary, it rather increases with being spent, something which is certainly not true of material possessions.<sup>291</sup> It is like the fire of a lamp which is not extinguished by kindling another fire from it.<sup>292</sup> It gives protection, whereas property requires protection, and "it exercises control, whereas property is something over which control is exercised."<sup>293</sup>

For Abû Ḥayyân at-Tawḥîdî, the superiority of knowledge over wealth was a foregone conclusion, and he knew why the two never went together. Plato and his own teacher, Abû Sulaymân al-Mantiqî as-Sijistânî, were his authorities: "Plato says: To the degree God gives wisdom, He withholds sustenance."<sup>294</sup> Abû Sulaymân's comment: This is because knowledge and wealth are like two

<sup>287</sup> Cf. al-Kutubî, *Fawât*, II, 62 (Cairo 1951–53).

<sup>288</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, 18 (Hermes).

<sup>289</sup> Cf. ar-Râghib al-Iṣfahânî, *Muhâḍarât*, I, 17.

<sup>290</sup> Cf. the verses to this effect cited by al-'Almawî, *Mu'îd*, 6 ff. Those ascribed there to Abû l-Aswad ad-Du'alî apparently are not in his *Dîwân*.

<sup>291</sup> Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyûn*, II, 120 (above, p. 256); Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 212; Miskawayh, *Tahdhîb*, 164.

<sup>292</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Adâb*, ed. Krachkovsky, VI, 58, and, similarly, Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 214 (in the name of Sufyân b. 'Uyaynah). A saying attributed to Plato in the Ms. Paris ar. 3953, fol. 10a–b, adds that like the lack of firewood, non-communication of knowledge, "the stinginess of its bearers," leads to its destruction. Ḥunayn, *Nawâdir*, fol. 60a, and Ibn Hindû, 22, add the further idea in the name of Plato that in contrast to everything else in the world, knowledge cannot be acquired with the help of servants. With respect to it, the individual is left to his own devices and capabilities. Cf. also al-Mubashshir, 132.

<sup>293</sup> Cf. 'Alî to Kumayl, above, p. 256; n. 5; al-Mâwardî, *Adab*, 21.

<sup>294</sup> "The more intelligence, the less sustenance," was the way Sufyân b. 'Uyaynah put it, cf. Abû Nu'aym, *Hilyah*, VII, 271.

wives (of the same man). They rarely go together and are reconciled to each other. Also, a man's portion of wealth results from the concupiscent and bestial soul, whereas his portion of knowledge results from the rational soul. These two portions oppose, and contradict each other. Further, a discerning and discriminating person must realize that a man who possesses knowledge is nobler in every conceivable respect than a man of wealth. If he is given knowledge, he need not despair of money, of which a little suffices, or greatly worry about the loss of it. Knowledge exercises control. Wealth is something over which control is exercised. Knowledge belongs to the soul. Wealth is corporeal. Knowledge belongs to a man in a more personal manner than wealth. The perils of the wealthy are many and sudden. You do not see a man who possesses knowledge robbed of his knowledge and left deprived of it. But you have seen quite a few people whose money was stolen, taken away, or confiscated, and the former owners remained helpless and destitute. Knowledge thrives on being spent. It accompanies its possessor into destitution. It makes it possible to be satisfied with little. It lowers a curtain over need. Wealth does not do that."<sup>295</sup>

However, knowledge meant wealth as was indicated, for instance, in a remark ascribed to Muṣ'ab b. az-Zubayr who was advising his son to acquire knowledge, for, he said, "if you have wealth, knowledge will be an ornament (*jamāl*) for you. If you do not have wealth, it will mean wealth for you."<sup>296</sup> It brought with it worldly advancement in the way described by the caliph 'Abd-al-Malik to his sons: "Acquire knowledge, for if you are lords, you will thereby advance in power and rank. If you belong to the middle class, you will become lords. And if you are common people, it will enable you to make a living."<sup>297</sup> It was, of course, also realized that money constituted power and together with knowledge was the magic formula that insured leadership in human society. Again, this was an idea derived from Hellenistic wisdom. It found expression in a saying that reads: "In this life, seek knowledge

<sup>295</sup> Cf. at-Tawḥīdī, *Imtā'*, II, 49. See also Yâqût, *Irshād*, VI, 150 = XVI, 231, where at-Tawḥīdī and Ibn Sâsân agree that luck (*jadd*) and knowledge rarely go together and that effort and trouble (*kadd*) go with knowledge, while luck goes with ignorance.

<sup>296</sup> Cf. al-Mâwardī, *Adab*, 16; al-Ghazzâlī, *Ihyâ'*, I, 8, trans. Faris, 17.

<sup>297</sup> Cf. al-Mâwardī, *Adab*, 16 f.

and wealth, and you will gain leadership, for there are two kinds of people, the elite and the common people. The elite will acknowledge your superiority because of your good knowledge and your ability to act correctly, and the common people will acknowledge your superiority because of your large property.”<sup>298</sup>

On the other hand, scholars were fascinated by the thought that knowledge by itself guaranteed political power and, what is more, the sound exercise of it.<sup>299</sup> At the very least, it was considered one of the ways through which political power could be achieved. Platonism, as it became known to the Muslims in early ‘Abbâsîd times, provided the foundation for this idea, although it had no doubt been around and in the air long before the formal acceptance of the Greek philosophical heritage. An apparently old and often cited dictum extolling the superiority of scholars over statesmen was attributed to the legendary grammarian of the seventh century, Abû l-Aswad ad-Du‘alî, and couched in this form: “There is nothing more powerful (*a‘azz*) than knowledge. This is shown by the fact that kings exercise control (*hukkâm*) over people, and scholars exercise control over kings.”<sup>300</sup> If the scholars themselves cannot be in positions of political power, then at least, the rulers should have knowledge. “Knowledge,” Aristotle says, “is an ornament of kings.”<sup>301</sup> Again, Greek statecraft is transferred to Iran in the form of a statement ascribed to Anûsharwân: “When God means well for a nation, He places knowledge in its kings, and kingship in

<sup>298</sup> Cf. Hunayn, *Nawâdir*, fol. 140a (*ÿnsus* = Aesop ?); Ibn Hindû, 24 (Plato); al-Mubashshir, 139 (Plato), 277 (Luqmân); at-Tawhîdî, *Imtâ‘*, II, 48 f. (Diogenes).

<sup>299</sup> The idea was also turned around. Just as humanity would die out without man’s sexual instincts, “knowledge would be lost, were there no love of leadership,” cf. Maḥmûd b. Muḥammad (above, p. 249, n. 3), in the name of al-Ma’mûn.

<sup>300</sup> Cf., for instance, Ibn Qutaybah, *‘Uyûn*, II, 121 (above, p. 258); Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *‘Iqd*, II, 215; al-Marzubânî, *Nûr al-qabas*, 12; Abû Aḥmad al-‘Askarî, *Maṣûn*, ed. ‘Abd-as-Salâm M. Hârûn, 137 (Kuwait 1960); al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ’*, I, 7, trans. Faris, 14; Ibn Jamâ‘ah, *Tadhkirah*, 10; also al-‘Askarî, *Hathth*, in Ms. Hamidiye 1464, fol. 55b.

Among scholars, the superiority of scholars over kings came to be taken for granted. An author of scholarly biographies (*tabaqât*) could begin his work with praising God who had raised the level (*tabaqât*) of scholars over the heads and crowns of kings, cf. as-Subkî, *Ṭabaqât ash-Shâfi‘îyah*, I, 13.

<sup>301</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, 193. More commonly, it is said that knowledge is an ornament for all who possess it. Cf. also al-‘Ashkarî, *Hathth*, in Ms. Aşir Ef. 433, fols. 47b–48a.



its scholars.”<sup>302</sup> The concept of the philosopher-king appears in Muslim *adab* under the name of Diogenes. “Asked when the world was in good shape, Diogenes replied: When its kings philosophize, and its philosophers are kings.”<sup>303</sup> Abû Ḥayyân at-Tawḥîdî tells us that Diogenes’ remark evoked a negative response from the wazîr in whose presence it was cited. With the political insight into human nature of the political realist, the wazîr doubted its validity. Philosophy, he argued, concerned as it is with the other world, implies an abdication from worldly affairs, “and how can a king abdicate from worldly affairs and have a dislike for them? He must lead and control the people of this world. This requires providing for material benefits (for them) and avoiding material harm (coming to them). He has friends whom he must guide, for whom he must set up houses and provide wealth, with whom he must eat and drink together and whom he must take care of, and whose private and public affairs he must oversee. A king is busier than a physician who must undertake many treatments with various drugs and diverse diets, and yet must first consider his own soul and his own body and avoid diseases and accidents (disease symptoms), inwardly and outwardly. How can a man of so many needs and concerns, and even more (than have just been described as falling to the lot of a king) be a king and also a sage (at the same time)? Considering this a possibility, someone could argue that a king may be gathering wisdom as (a champion of religious) propaganda, while directly and immediately taking care of his government duties. However, this would mean an intensely complicated state of confusion both for the kingdom and for philosophy, rather than putting the matter on a solid footing in principle and in detail. The wazîr added: Therefore, we are unable to find in Islam more than a small number of statesmen who governed abstemiously, piously, and with a view to piety and righteousness.” Referring to the Zoroastrians (Majûs), the author then switches from philosophy to religion

<sup>302</sup> Cf. the introduction of the great medical encyclopaedia of ‘Alî b. al-‘Abbâs al-Majûsî, *Kâmil*, I, 3 (Bûlâq 1294); al-Mâwardî, *Adab*, 20, who cites “an ancient scholar” as his authority. Scholars naturally were aware that it served their own interest to recommend to rulers that they seek the company of scholars, cf., for instance, Miskawayh, *Jâwîdhân Khiradh*, 47 (Buzurjmihr), and all the other *fürstenspiegel*.

<sup>303</sup> Cf. at-Tawḥîdî, *Imtâ’*, II, 48 f. Cf. Ibn Hindû, 117: “(Crates), asked by Alexander who was fit to be king, replied, ‘Either a philosopher who rules, or a king who concerns himself with philosophy.’”

and discusses the ideal relationship between political leadership and the religious law, as he sees it. Ibn Khaldûn was later on to continue the debate about suitability or lack of suitability of scholars for political leadership on entirely secular grounds.<sup>304</sup>

The religious implications of the term “scholar” were also underlying the opposite view of the mutual role of knowledge and political power which far from proclaiming the dominance of scholars over kings considered any contact of scholars with the government as something pernicious and improper, at any rate for the scholars and for their scholarly status. The *adab* formulation of this view attributed to the Syrian jurist, al-Awzâ’î (d. 157/774), tended to be particularly emphatic, in order to achieve the greatest possible effect: “God hates nothing more than a scholar who visits an amîr.”<sup>305</sup> There also is a saying credited to Sufyân (ath-Thawrî) that “there is a special valley in Hell inhabited only by Qur’ân readers who (while alive) were frequent visitors of kings.”<sup>306</sup> Other pertinent statements run: “The worst amîrs are those most remote from the scholars, and the worst scholars are those closest to the amîrs.”<sup>307</sup> And, “if you see a scholar who is constantly around the government, you should realize that he is a thief,”<sup>308</sup> for the warning against contacts of scholars with the government was frequently coupled with imprecations against the evils of a scholar’s desire for wealth.<sup>309</sup> The pious and the mystics considered all government as tainted by money, and any contact with political power as defiling. Many no doubt acted in accordance with this conviction,

<sup>304</sup> Cf. Ibn Khaldûn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal, III, 308 ff.

<sup>305</sup> Cf. al-‘Almawî, *Mu’id*, 32 f. Sezgin, I, 517, mentions a *Maqâm al-Awzâ’î ‘ind al-mulûk*, which may possibly have something to do with this saying. The statement was also made into a *ḥadîth* with the substitution of “Qur’ân readers” for “scholars,” cf. *Concordance*, I, 397b7, cited by Ibn Rajab (see below, n. 6) in Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi’*, I, 178, in his chapter on blaming scholars for seeking contact with unjust amîrs. It is significant that the remark is qualified here so as to refer only to *unjust* amîrs.

<sup>306</sup> Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi’*, I, 165.

<sup>307</sup> Cf. ar-Râghib al-Isfahânî, *Muḥâḍarât*, I, 18; az-Zamakhsharî, *Rabî’*, in Ms. Yale L-5, fol. 187b; Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi’*, I, 185, etc. Cf. also Abû Nu’aym, *Hilyah*, III, 243 f.

<sup>308</sup> Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Iḥyâ’*, I, 54, trans. Faris, 159; al-‘Âmilî, *Kashkûl*, I, 180. Cf. also Abû Nu’aym, *Hilyah*, III, 184.

<sup>309</sup> Cf. the chapter of Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr’s *Jâmi’* just cited, or the short treatise by Ibn Rajab, commenting on the *ḥadîth*: “Hungry wolves let loose in a sheep enclosure could do no greater harm than the love of wealth and noble rank do to a man’s religion,” reprinted in the edition of Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi’*, I, 167–83.

and while saving their own souls and those of their followers, contributed to the undermining of effective government control and the weakening of the strength and vitality of the social fabric. Most scholars, while suspicious of the purely material aspects of government and wary of the all too obvious dangers always threatening men in positions of leadership,<sup>310</sup> were convinced that knowledge—their kind of knowledge, to be sure—was the key to an equitable and satisfactory management of society.

This conviction was matched by the hardly less meaningful conviction that the search for knowledge and the spread of knowledge constituted the most valid and effective incentives for formal social groupings on a more intimate individual or community level. “Knowledge” was the group activity *par excellence* leading to the formation of a nucleus with a great and desirable potential for growing and, hopefully, for dominating society. We do find expressions of the opposite view that knowledge is “a companion in loneliness” (*mu’nis fī l-waḥdah*, and the like),<sup>311</sup> that it serves as an escape mechanism and provides a refuge for the individual from the iniquities of this world to which he could repair at will, withdrawing into its shell. “A sage said to his son: You must concern yourself with knowledge, for the least benefit it confers upon the person possessing it is that he does not remain alone,”<sup>312</sup> because knowledge is always there to keep him company.

I am happy with loneliness,  
Having taken knowledge for company,  
Having withdrawn from the people,  
And approving of forgetting and of being forgotten.<sup>313</sup>

This sentiment was, however, more commonly voiced in connection with books, those best companions and friends a man could have.<sup>314</sup>

<sup>310</sup> Cf. the statements on “seeking leadership” collected by Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jāmi‘*, I, 143 f.

<sup>311</sup> Cf. al-‘Askarī, *Ḥaṭṭh*, in Ms. Hamidiye 1464, fol. 54a. Cf. also above, p. 183.

<sup>312</sup> Cf. al-Mubashshir, 33. It is not meant here that a scholar will never be alone because he will always find congenial company.

<sup>313</sup> The poet was Abū l-Faḍl ‘Abd-ar-Raḥīm b. Aḥmad b. al-Ukhūwah al-Baghdādī, and the verses were quoted by his contemporary, the historian of Nisābūr, ‘Abd-al-Ghāfir (d. 529/1134–35), cf. R. N. Frye. *The Histories of Nishapur*, fol. 46b (Cambridge, Mass., 1965).

<sup>314</sup> Verses cited by Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jāmi‘*, II, 204, speak of knowledge as the best companion. The context shows that this must be understood as referring to books as usual.

The search for knowledge demands foregoing the pleasures of companionship, but this is usually understood to mean frivolous and unprofitable human relations.<sup>315</sup> Knowledge is rather something to be shared. It is restricted to an elite, since the ignorant are not only proverbially hostile to knowledge and those who possess knowledge,<sup>316</sup> but they also greatly outnumber the learned and always will.<sup>317</sup> This makes scholars always gravitate toward each other. Learned men never find themselves strangers anywhere.<sup>318</sup> They alone recognize each other, since the ignorant are unable to perceive the worth of learning, never having possessed any learning before.<sup>319</sup> And they enjoy only the company of their peers. There is nothing to be pitied more than men of knowledge who have to put up with ignoramuses.<sup>320</sup> This often expressed view appears also

<sup>315</sup> Cf., for instance, Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 83 f.; al-'Almawî, *Mu'îd*, 61.

<sup>316</sup> Cf. above, pp. 270 f., and, for instance, Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 348. According to ash-Shâfi'î, "knowledge is ignorance for the ignorant, just as ignorance is ignorance for the learned" (cf. as-Subkî, *Tabaqât ash-Shâfi'îyah*, I, 158), but he thinks of knowledge mainly as jurisprudence.

<sup>317</sup> Cf. above, p. 309.

<sup>318</sup> Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyûn*, II, 121 (above, p. 257, n. 2). Contrast p. 309, n. 5. It has also been said that the *'âqil*, the man of intelligence, is nowhere a stranger, cf., for instance, Ibn Abî d-dunyâ, *Aql*, 23.

<sup>319</sup> The Greek original attributed to Xenophanes reads: "When Empedocles mentioned to him that a wise man cannot be found, he replied, 'Rightly so, for the person who wants to recognize a wise man must be wise himself'" (cf. Diogenes Laertius, IX, 20, and *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, no. 283, where the authority is Empedocles himself, also further references). The common Arabic version reads: "The man of knowledge (*'âlim*) recognizes the ignorant person, because he (himself) was ignorant (once). The ignorant man, however, does not recognize the man of knowledge, because he never was one." Cf., for instance, Hunayn, *Navâdir*, fol. 66a (Aristotle); Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Âdâb*, ed. Krachkovsky, VI, 60, cited by al-Mâwardî, *Adab*, 17; at-Tawhîdî, *Imtâ'*, II, 44, where the situation governing the relationship between physician and patient is adduced for comparison; al-Mubashshir, 190 (Aristotle).

A further generalization, which poses an unsolved logical problem unless knowledge is assumed to be natural or inspirational, states that knowledge can be recognized only through knowledge, and this makes it impossible for those without knowledge to recognize the worth of knowledge, cf. al-Mâwardî, *Adab*, 17.

<sup>320</sup> Cf., for instance, Hunayn, *Navâdir*, fol. 156b (*Dymqrîṭ* Democrates), fol. 157a-b (anonymous [Socrates]); al-'Âmirî, *I'lâm*, 179, who speaks of men of intelligence; Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Bahjah*, I, 135; al-Mubashshir, 102 (Socrates). Versification of the idea attests further to its wide appeal:

Nothing is more of a lost job than a man of knowledge  
Whom the world forces to mingle with ignoramuses.

Cf. Ibn al-Fuwaṭî, *Talkhîṣ*, IV, 1, 383. For an illustrative anecdote involving Thumâmah, cf. Ibn Abî l-Ḥadîd, V, 318.

in the form of a witty anecdote told of one of the Persian kings. He imprisoned a scholar who had angered him together with an ignorant man in the same room, as the worst punishment he could think of.<sup>321</sup> Thus, in defense against the world as well as on account of the intrinsic nature of knowledge, scholars must band together, in order to insure the persistence of knowledge in the world by communicating with each other and, above all, by transmitting their knowledge to others, if they are deserving. Nothing is more sterile than uncommunicated knowledge.<sup>322</sup> Nothing is more significant for society at large than the small groupings of teachers and students. Nothing, in short, has greater basic value for society than knowledge.

<sup>321</sup> Cf. Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jāmi'*, I, 135. In Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Bahjah*, I, 543. *ʿāqil* and *aḥmaq* replace *ʿālim* and *jāhil*. In al-Māwardī, *Adab*, 11, it is *ʿāqil* and *jāhil*.

<sup>322</sup> Cf., for instance, Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn*, II, 126 (above, p. 260), or Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Ādāb*, ed. Krachkovsky, VI, 60: "A person who conceals some kind of knowledge is like one who does not know it." Further, Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 215; al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā'*, I, 49, trans. Faris, 144 f., and elsewhere in the *Ihyā'*; Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jāmi'*, I, 3 ff., 122 ff. In Muslim terms, the duty to communicate knowledge is succinctly expressed in the words: "The charity tax (*ṣakāh*) on knowledge is the teaching of it," cf. ar-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, I, 64 f., and above, pp. 183 and 315. See also above, p. 326, n. 6.

## CONCLUDING REMARK

The title of this book claims that in Islam, the concept of knowledge enjoyed an importance unparalleled in other civilizations. The preceding pages have proved, I believe, its domination over all aspects of Muslim intellectual, spiritual, and social life. "Knowledge" certainly triumphed among the educated classes, and they set the tone for all the others. It has been contended that the great masses of the people cannot have been immune to the inescapable impact of the veneration for knowledge displayed by their leaders. The question remains whether there is some direct means to measure their response. The willingness of ordinary people to let themselves be guided by slogans becomes obvious at certain periods in history and is easily accounted for. However, the endurance and effectiveness of slogans over long stretches of time or the entire lifetime of civilizations are difficult, if not impossible, to calculate and to explain. This applies with particular force to civilizations of the past where any documentation, however plentiful it may seem, is fragmentary in the extreme.

The so-called popular literature with its proven mass appeal may be of some help on this respect. Its outlook on the world is, in fact, not determined by its mass audience but represents a filtered and simplified version of the thought of the comparatively few who constituted the intellectual elite at one time or another. However, it is a reasonable gauge of popular feeling. Unfortunately, it so happens that only a very small part of the medieval literature of Muslim peoples can be considered to be of a distinctly popular type. The "conquest novels," for instance, would seem to fall into this category. By way of fictitious historical examples, they depict the proper attitude of the fighter for the cause of Islam. He is represented as willing to die for his faith (*îmân*) and for the true religion of Islam (*ad-dîn*). He could hardly be expected to give his life for "knowledge." The holy war was to be fought with slogans more elementary than "knowledge" could ever hope, or fear, to be. On the other hand, the edifying treatises holding up fictitious early conversions to Islam as models for later generations made every effort to show that the superior knowledge and insight of the representative of the Muslim side of the debate were essential

for its inevitable success. The famous "Questions" of 'Abdallâh b. Salâm illustrate this point very clearly. Sermons were certainly preached for the masses, although it may be seriously doubted that the sermons which were set down in writing and constituted a productive branch of literature continued to serve as popular reading. If "knowledge" seems to play an insignificant role in the homiletic literature, it was the natural result of the general outlook of all Muslim preaching. It was orientated toward the other world and, to an even greater degree, away from the total evil of this world. Its recommendations were therefore all negative as far as this world was concerned. There was no good reason to recommend something like "knowledge" that had so many positive worldly aspects in addition to its religious value. In contrast, the fairy tale literature looked to this world. It reflects ordinary life with astonishing faithfulness, including the wishful thoughts and aspirations and hopes of ordinary people. Thus, in the peaceful bourgeois world of the *Arabian Nights*, knowledge together with *adab* has its secure place as part of the good life of man and is felt to be something that cannot be properly divorced from material and spiritual prosperity.

Altogether, the evidence from popular literature is inconclusive. We have to fall back upon the contention that the constant concern and occupation with "knowledge" in all fields of intellectual endeavor cannot have remained without eliciting a strong and positive response from the masses. It may be added that those unable to respond to the clear voice of their intellectual spokesmen hardly count as contributors to the determination of cultural values and attitudes. "Knowledge" was moreover the most stringent of conditions for admission to legitimate political leadership ("legitimate" as against the often illegitimate role assumed by the military in the political arena). Respect for it, as well as, on occasion, hatred and derision, can be assumed to have been shared by all members of the community, even those at the bottom of the social ladder. Admittedly, we have no statistics or positive evidence and are forced to rely on inference. Its weight, however, seems strong enough to support the view that what has been established as the intellectual attitude of Muslim civilization can be taken as representative of all Islam.

Another question remains to be answered. No special position can be claimed for "knowledge" in Muslim civilization, unless we

have at least some assurance that comparable societies elsewhere in the world did not accord to it an equally distinguished or even more powerful position. It need hardly be said that the comparison of different civilizations is always a very hazardous and questionable undertaking. Many unprovable presuppositions are required under any circumstances. Where general human values such as knowledge are involved, the variables become so many and so convergent that their comparison and distinction would seem to be an unmanageable task. Knowledge is at the root of every advance in human society. Our contention has been no more and no less than that in Islam, this fact has found its triumphant verbalization centering around the very word "knowledge." Consequently, we must rule out as irrelevant attempts to determine the significance of "knowledge" for other civilizations on the basis merely of the strength of the intellectual factors operative in them. Awareness of the fundamental character of knowledge has meant, and continues to mean, enormously much for the growth of modern Western civilization. Ours is a civilization wedded to knowledge. It also is a civilization of a variety and extent never seen before. Future generations will be left with the task to discover whether the concept of knowledge as such influenced the development of the modern world with greater force and effect than did other abstract ideas. In any case, it does not seem proper or instructive to compare a past as yet undisturbed by the miraculous advance of technology and communications with a present that is without its peer in human history.

Graeco-Roman philosophy had the deepest respect for thinking (*phronēin*) as the greatest of virtues, as stated by Heraclitus,<sup>1</sup> for pure knowledge (*theōria*) as the sweetest and best of human endeavors, as it was in the view of Aristotle<sup>2</sup> no less than in that of his teacher, or for knowledge (*epistēmē*) as the one and only virtue, as the Stoics proclaimed.<sup>3</sup> Yet, nobody would wish to argue that the attitude toward knowledge in the Ancient World as a whole or in any particular region or epoch of it was inspired and sustained by the same single-minded devotion that existed in medieval Islam. In the merger of ethics with knowledge, ethics always retained the greater attraction for the minds and emotions

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Diels, *Vorsokratiker*, I, 99, Heraclitus B 112.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1072b24, see above, p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, III, 60; Pohlenz, *Stoa*, I, 125.



of the Ancients and exercised greater power over them. Nor was the sphere of religion ever fused with that of knowledge as inseparably as happened later on in Islam.

When Christianity took over from the Greek and Roman world and created the Western "Middle Ages," the concept of knowledge relinquished whatever privileged position it occupied in the Ancient World. Knowledge was cultivated, and wisdom cherished, but the medieval mind was not moved by any magic spell emanating from the word "knowledge" or a belief in its unsurpassed religious and worldly merit. A philosopher of the recent past, looking at knowledge in its Western habitat, divided the whole of it into *Bildungswissen*, *Erlösungswissen*, and *Herrschaftswissen* (or *Leistungswissen*). The last kind of knowledge, the effort of science to control nature and society, is assumed to have been undeveloped in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages. Strong as both *Bildungswissen* and *Erlösungswissen* were in the past, *Bildungswissen*, the effort to improve the individual personality, is believed to be little cultivated now, and *Erlösungswissen*, the desire to learn about the divine order of the world and to achieve salvation, is, we are told, no longer of any real significance.<sup>4</sup> If we look at Islam in this way, we find that metaphysical, ethical, and scientific knowledge, and, in addition knowledge as the power tool of society, were not all present in equal strength, but they were present and active. They were conceived as part of one human-divine attribute called "knowledge," which held sway over all human and divine affairs. "Knowledge" did not convey any such feeling to the people of Christian Europe during their Middle Ages, regardless of what particular aim they sought most to accomplish through their intellectual efforts.

Islam may be compared or contrasted with the civilizations of Classical Antiquity and the Christian West. At the same time, however, these three are branches of the very same tree. In particular, they share the same roots of "knowledge." It could be argued that any noticeable differences merely reflect stronger or weaker shades of the same color. The true test for the thesis that the concept of knowledge achieved its unique triumph in Islam must involve a comparison of Islam with the civilizations of India and China. Such a comparison requires the possession of a linguistic

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. M. Scheler, *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft*, 64 ff., 250 (Leipzig 1926), cited by Stark, *Sociology of Knowledge*, 117.

and historical equipment far beyond the grasp of this writer. In fact, I feel that if at all, it can be undertaken successfully only after studies of the attitudes toward "knowledge" in India and China have been undertaken along lines similar to those followed in the present work. As far as I know, this has not yet been done. However, the problem cannot be avoided in our context, and the brief glance of an uninformed observer—and moreover, one who is needs prejudiced in favor of his own thesis—may be of some interest, if only because of the absence of something better.

Chinese philosophy<sup>5</sup> has attempted to give formal and abstract definitions of knowledge, although this appears to have been done only on quite rare occasions. We thus hear a Chinese thinker speak of knowledge as that through which one knows and knows something for certain as through illumination.<sup>6</sup> Knowledge is something innate, but it also depends on the testimony of the senses. Confucius further noted that knowledge is the innate ability to distinguish one's possession of knowledge from one's non-possession of knowledge. He also made a point which was considered similarly as important by Muslim authorities, namely, that a combination of reason and knowledge is a necessary requirement and that the absence of the one or the other results in creating situations that are either useless or dangerous.<sup>7</sup> However, Chinese and, in particular, Neo-Confucian thought was thoroughly dominated by the idea of the inseparability of knowledge from action. In the Chinese view, action, and not knowledge, is the chief concern of the individual and of society. Action was regarded "as more important, more trustworthy, more easily grasped, or more difficult, and hence of greater concern." The opposite view was occasionally expressed. The author of an essay on "Knowledge and Action," who lived in the third century A.D., argued that "a life of learning and the attainment of perfect understanding (was) more valuable than a

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<sup>5</sup> I wish to thank my colleagues, Hans Frankel and Arthur F. Wright, for some greatly appreciated advice.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. A. Forke, *Geschichte der alten chinesischen Philosophie*, 2nd ed., 410 f. (Hamburg 1964). Cf., further, his *Geschichte der mittelalterlichen chinesischen Philosophie*, 92, and *Geschichte der neueren chinesischen Philosophie*, 453. For "innate knowledge," cf. also Wing-tsit Chan, *Instructions for Practical Knowledge and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yang-ming*, 107 ff., 132 ff., 198, 218 f., etc. (New York and London 1963).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Forke, *Geschichte der alten chinesischen Philosophie*, 129. See above, p. 276, n. 2.

life of action and the perfection of one's conduct."<sup>8</sup> This was clearly the exception.

Already the Confucian definitions just mentioned did not single out knowledge as occupying a position of particular significance. Knowledge was at best one among a number of important components constituting man and his world. It is true that "learning" was the beginning and end of all Chinese societal endeavor, but like knowledge, all study was directed toward action. Since the days of al-Jāhiz, Arabic literature has always maintained that skilled craftsmanship was the national characteristics of the Chinese: "In contrast to the Greeks, the Chinese engage only in practical work. They are men of the active life and, therefore, do not inquire into the motive powers behind their activities."<sup>9</sup> Simplifying and thus misleading as this statement obviously is, it is in a way confirmed by the stress placed in Chinese thought on action as man's overriding concern. "Knowledge" inevitably had to be a subject of discussion in Chinese civilization. However, it did not achieve there the status of a basic concept and even less so, that of an inspiring slogan of wide appeal and great efficacy, notwithstanding the fact that Chinese society put a premium on learning and education.

The situation in India appears to have been totally different. Action fades into the background. Epistemology at its most abstract comes to the fore as an abiding preoccupation of Indian thinkers. Second-hand reading, which being based upon translation may be misleading, reveals occasional contacts with ideas also found expressed in Islam. Thus, for instance, the relationship of knower, knowledge, and object known was variously discussed.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Both quotations are from D. S. Nivison, *The Problem of "Knowledge" and "Action" in Chinese Thought since Wang Yang-ming*, in A. F. Wright (ed.), *Studies in Chinese Thought*, 114 (Chicago 1953). Mencius had no theory of knowledge, and all his thinking was about action, cf. I. A. Richards, *Mencius on the Mind*, 61 (New York 1932). For the identity of knowledge and action or the superiority of action over knowledge in Confucian tradition, cf. Wing-tsit Chan, *Instructions*, XXXV ff.

Nivison, 135, cites a nineteenth-century thinker as assigning to knowledge a higher value than to action and as saying that "religion is the means of pursuing knowledge." This, however, is decidedly modern, and it cannot be compared with Islamic data.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Rosenthal, *Technique and Approach*, 71 f.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, I, 382 f. (Cambridge 1932): "All knowledge involves the knower, the known object, and the knowledge at the same identical moment." Also, III, 146 (reprint Cambridge

We also find distinctions made between what is useful and what, like wealth, is useless,<sup>11</sup> or between false knowledge and true knowledge and the role of doubt in this connection.<sup>12</sup> Indian speculation, however, went deeper into the abstract problem of knowledge than Muslim scholars ever did, even in later centuries and in the eastern part of the Muslim world where Indian influence was always a possibility, and often a fact. In the nature of Sanskrit, this speculation involved a great variety of terms which were filled with specific meanings. There was no single dominating term. For us, this is the principal consideration. It effectively eliminates any Indian competition for Arabic *ʿilm* as a unique culture term. No matter how greatly imbued Indian civilization was with “knowledge,”<sup>13</sup> it did not grant one term the free run of its entire intellectual and societal landscape.

In conclusion, the question may be asked: What does it mean for a civilization, and beyond it, for the history of mankind, if “knowledge” is made its central concern? It would seem doubtful whether an answer in terms of good or bad would have any validity whatever. For a given society, “good” is what it itself acknowledges as such, and “bad” is whatever it rejects. If two different civilizations were to hold the same value judgments on matters of central concern to them, they probably would not be really different. And if their value judgments differ, whatever their respective members think about each other is based upon different premises and must therefore appear highly subjective. Its insistence upon “knowledge” has no doubt made medieval Muslim civilization one of great scholarly and scientific productivity, and through it, Muslim civilization made its most lasting contribution to mankind.

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1952): “All persons experience that knowledge is felt to be as distinct from the ‘I’, the knower, as the object known.”

<sup>11</sup> Cf. D. H. H. Ingalls, *An Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry*, no. 1604, and commentary, p. 574 (Cambridge, Mass., 1965, *Harvard Oriental Series* 44), in connection with *vivekajñāna*.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, I, 193, and III, 4 f., also, I, 332, n. 3, on doubt (*saṃśaya*) as a part of ignorance (*avidyā*). Cf. also Dharendra Mohan Datta, *Epistemological Methods in Indian Philosophy*, in C. A. Moore (ed.), *The Indian Mind*, 118–36 (Honolulu 1967).

An interesting passage on knowledge occurs in L. Hurvitz, *The Road to Buddhist Salvation as described by Vasubhadra*, in *JAOs*, LXXXVII (1967), 440. As translated from the Chinese, it recalls a good deal of the Muslim speculation on knowledge but appears to come closest to some Ṣūfī views.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. above, p. 241, n. 2, and p. 309, n. 4.

“Knowledge” as its center also hardened Muslim civilization and made it impervious to anything that did not fall within its view of what constituted acceptable knowledge. We can see how much can be achieved by the fusion of intellectual and spiritual values in one dominant concept, but the drawbacks of this process also are obvious. After all has been said, no one answer would seem possible to the question just asked, and it is, perhaps, enough merely to have posed it. However this may be, we may be satisfied with having analyzed a powerful, and, perhaps, the most effective rallying force in medieval Islam.

## INDEX

The Index includes all personal proper names as well as some titles of works of unknown authorship and a very few pre-Islamic group names. A short title added in brackets after a page reference indicates that the work in question is as a rule cited repeatedly and bibliographical data are to be found on the page indicated. If work cited repeatedly is not mentioned in the Index in this way, the first page reference can be counted on to contain the needed bibliographical information. Cross-referencing among the various components of proper names has been kept to a minimum and is therefore necessarily arbitrary. Abbreviations: A. = Aḥmad, 'Al. = 'Abd-allāh, and M. = Muḥammad.

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